

A Biblical World and Lifeview

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Every single person in the world has a worldview. A worldview is the conceptual grid we use to understand how life fits together. But most people (including most Christians) never really think about what their worldview is. Thus their worldview is filled with inconsistencies, and is usually a mish-mash of Biblical and unbiblical ideas. As Christians we are called to glorify God in all we do (1Cor 10:31), and to love God with our minds (Mt 22:37.) Thus we must seek to have a consistently Biblical world and lifeview. We must bow to God's interpretation of the world, and adhere to the interpretive grid we find revealed in His Word.

When we begin to look at this idea of a worldview, we find that there are four basic questions that every worldview must attempt to answer. First, the question of origin, where did we come from? Second, the question of meaning, why are we here? Third, the question of morality (or ethics), why do we do what we do? And fourth, the question of destiny, where are we going. As we evaluate the different answers given to these questions, we should submit them to three tests. First, is the answer logically consistent? Second, is it empirically verifiable? (i.e. Is there any evidence for it?) And lastly, Is it existentially relevant? (i.e. Can I live it?) Every worldview tries in some way to provide answers to these questions. Be it the worldview of Materialism, or Buddhism, or Deism, these questions must be dealt with. But it is not enough to come up with answers that we like, we must seek to discover how God has answered these questions. Unfortunately many Christians fail to do this, and thus they have bits and pieces from all sorts of mutually-exclusive worldviews floating around in their heads! Most commonly, Christians today will have a mixture of a Biblical, and Secular/Materialistic worldview, often with contradictory ideas that have never been thought through.

What is the worldview taught in the Bible? This is difficult to briefly summarize because to fully answer this question we must look at the "whole counsel of God." In this age of quick answers there is a desperate need for Christians who will think through all that the Bible has to say about a particular topic, rather than settling for a couple of "proof-texts." However, there are some Biblical categories that should be the basis of forming a truly Biblical world and lifeview. They are creation, fall, and redemption.

Creation: A Biblical worldview starts with the assertion that God has created all that there is and He rules over it sovereignly. He is not a part of creation, and He affirms the goodness of what He has created (Gen 1:31, 1Tim 4:4-5.) Some important aspects of creation are that God affirms the goodness of physical reality. Unlike the Greek philosophers (and much popular Christian teaching), physical reality is not inherently of a lower order than spiritual reality. In fact we could say that all of life is spiritual! We should never make a sort of sacred/secular dichotomy in our thinking about life or our callings. Also mankind (male and female) is made in God's image and is the crown of creation. Mankind has dignity because man has been made in God's image, and though fallen, we still retain that image (Gen 9:6.) Francis Schaeffer is correct when he calls man a "glorious ruin." From the creation account in Genesis we find what our purpose is. We are called to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, in everything we do, as image bearers living in a covenant relationship with our Creator-God. It is important that we answer the question of purpose correctly. Often Christians make the mistake of confusing a valid

sub-purpose (like evangelism or social justice) with purpose of man. To paraphrase Calvin, a half truth masquerading as the whole truth, is a complete untruth. Our purpose is to glorify God, though there are a plethora of ways this is carried out.

To help us categorize what it means to glorify God, theologians often refer to the three mandates of creation. The first is the cultural mandate (Gen 2:15, 1:28) We are called to "till the Garden." This means first of all that work is not a result of the Fall but it is part of what we were made for. As O.P. Robertson says, we are called to, "... bring out all the potential within the creation which might offer glory to the Creator." This means we should pursue things like science and the arts because they are no less important than things like evangelism and so-called "spiritual" activities. The second mandate is the social mandate. This is found in Gen 1:28 where we are told to be fruitful and multiply. This is the basis for marriage and family life. The third mandate is the spiritual mandate. This is the call to worship God and cultivate our relationship with Him. We see the Sabbath as part of God's provision for nurturing our love relationship with Him. When we take all of these mandates together we see that God's call to obedience is bigger than refraining from eating the forbidden fruit. He calls us to glorify Him in every area of life. Fall: A Biblical worldview must also consider how the Fall has affected the world we live in. From Romans 8:19-23 we discover that not only has man fallen and been corrupted by Adam's sin, but that the whole creation has been affected. Because the crown of creation (man) has failed to fulfill his purpose, all of creation has failed to achieve its purpose, it has become frustrated. The Fall means that what we see around us is not what God intended. We must remember that we live in a fallen world, and we are called to boldly face this fact (Mt 6:34.) We are never called to downplay the reality of sin or to deny our own propensity for self-deception (Jer 17:9), and our inability to fix what is wrong with the world in our own strength. This means we must look to God and His Word for our direction, rather than to our own ideas, and that we must never look to education or political structures to solve this world's problems. Rather we look to God to extend His Kingdom into all areas of life. This brings us to our third category.

Redemption: A Biblical worldview must take into account the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. His Kingdom is moving forward and the gates of Hell (gates are defensive weapons remember) won't be able to stop its advance. Christ's Kingdom is not a merely spiritual one (as some Christians believe), He rules over all things, though right now we don't see it (Heb 2:8.) History is going somewhere and our God holds the future in His hands.

As we consider these three categories (remembering this is just scratching the surface of all that a Biblical worldview entails) we see that our attitude towards the world we live in should be to recognize its inherent value and dignity (creation), honestly face its brokenness and sin (fall), and remember with confident hope that God's Kingdom is on the move and will extend (in the words of Isaac Watts in "Joy to the World") "far as the curse is found" (redemption.) May we take up the challenge to love God with our minds and seek to develop a Biblical world and lifeview by His grace and power as we seek to glorify Him in all we do!