



# Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

LESSON 88 – DEFINING WORLDVIEWS: THEISM

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 399-451

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – WAYNE GRUDEM, PGS. 439-528

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# In the Beginning

- ▶ *The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.* – Psalm 93:1
- ▶ Remember that a worldview is a grid through which we view reality and by which we answer questions about meaning, right and wrong, life and death, and so forth.
- ▶ At the time of the Protestant Reformation we find in history that this is the dominant worldview in Western thought. There was a fundamental belief in a personal Creator God who created us in His image. That alone gives us meaning and purpose in life.
- ▶ As men try to figure out the answer to questions about life and reality, right and wrong, God and humanity, they eventually tried to kill God off and have found themselves standing in the dead end of Postmodernism where everything is valid and invalid, all is right and wrong, and there is no absolute truth.

# In the Beginning

- ▶ Hebrews 11:3 states, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”
- ▶ Faith in God and His Word informs our mind and heart about the absolute truths of this world and the world to come.
- ▶ Theism can be defined as a worldview that is built upon this statement – The Bible is the Word of God. The Scriptures are the very words of God given to us through the hands of men inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Our conscience, our faith, our minds must then be subject to the Word of God. Luther said it this way, “My conscience is bound by the word of God.” It is the Bible that binds our conscience, that informs our morals, that gives us the meaning of right and wrong. It is the Bible that tells us where we have come from and where we are going. It is the Bible that defines who God is and what He requires of us for fellowship and the forgiveness of sin – in fact, it is the very Law of God that exposes our need for a Savior based on our inability to keep God’s Word.

# The Word of God

- ▶ The Bible is perfectly sufficient, giving us everything we need to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- ▶ The Bible is not just inspired, it is sufficient.
- ▶ Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:5 that “your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”
- ▶ And he writes in Colossians 2:8, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”
- ▶ We must believe the truth about the Bible, the reality of God in Three-Persons (the Trinity), about the Person and Work of Christ, about creation, about the meaning of life, about sin and salvation, self and the Savior, the church and eternity. And we must live according to what we believe. This is where a worldview is tested.

# Do We believe What We Believe?

- ▶ If we have a Biblical worldview then we do what the Bible tells us to do. Are we walking in the Spirit as He produces the Fruit of the Spirit through us, or are we continually creating the works of the flesh and always failing to walk in the Spirit?
- ▶ If we are only ever walking in the flesh then we cannot claim Christ or a Biblical worldview. What we believe we live.
- ▶ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. – 1 John 2:3-6
- ▶ By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. – 1 John 5:2-3

# Your Life Reveals Your Worldview

- ▶ As stated, many err in the arena of worldviews by thinking that being in Christ gives them the freedom to do whatever they want to do. In taking Christian liberty and making of it a divine right for self-indulgence, they prove that they have a worldview that is not Biblical. Why? Because a Biblical worldview is focused on God, not on self.
- ▶ Having a Biblical worldview is critical to knowing truth and to understanding why things are the way that they are.
- ▶ Do you see components of these other worldviews in your thoughts and life?

# How Your Theology Shapes Your Worldview

- ▶ By Michael Horton
- ▶ Your Doctrine of God...Does God have all power and authority over the universe? Or is history a battle between good and evil forces? Is this world rational and ordered? What is justice, good, truth, beauty? How are these reflections of God's character? What is the significance of the affirmation that "the Word became flesh" for our view of our humanness and the importance of this world?
- ▶ Your Doctrine of Man...Is man a product of chance? What distinguishes humans from the rest of creation? What is the "image of God"? Do people still possess that image even if they aren't Christians? What does this mean for the arena of life we share in common with non-Christians (work and play, etc.)? Are humans basically good or evil? What does this mean for government and law? How do we balance liberty and justice? Can we expect to build an ideal society?

# How Your Theology Shapes Your Worldview

- ▶ Your Doctrine of Salvation...Is salvation eternal or temporal? Do people really need saving? From what? Of what does the Christian doctrine of salvation consist? Is salvation the work of God entirely, or the work of God and man, or man alone?
- ▶ Your Doctrine of the Church...Are we saved from the world or in the world? Is the church a community that is separated from the world or to God in the world? Is the church a community of only those who are truly saved, or is it a mixed body of Christians and hypocrites which will only be sorted out on the last day? How important are the earthly sacraments of bread, wine, and water in our Christian experience? What are my responsibilities to the church as well as to my calling?

# How Your Theology Shapes Your Worldview

- ▶ Your Doctrine of History and the Future... Is God's history of salvation, from Genesis to Revelation, a story of escape from this world and normal human history, or a story of providence and redemption in real time and space history? Are we wasting our time getting involved in this world when it is going to pass away? Does God plan to save only individuals or the whole created order, as he did with Noah?

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ By Jerry Solomon
- ▶ First, Why is there something rather than nothing? Some may actually say something came from nothing. Others may state that something is here because of impersonal spirit or energy. And many believe matter is eternal.
- ▶ Second, How do you explain human nature? Frequently people will say we are born as blank slates, neither good nor evil. Another popular response is that we are born good, but society causes us to behave otherwise.
- ▶ Third, What happens to a person at death? Many will say that a person's death is just the disorganization of matter. Increasingly people in our culture are saying that death brings reincarnation or realization of oneness.

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ Fourth, How do you determine what is right and wrong? Often we hear it said that ethics are relative or situational. Others assert that we have no free choice since we are entirely determined. Some simply derive "oughts" from what "is." And of course history has shown us the tragic results of a "might makes right" answer.
- ▶ Fifth, How do you know that you know? Some say that the mind is the center of our source of knowledge. Things are only known deductively. Others claim that knowledge is only found in the senses. We know only what is perceived.
- ▶ Sixth, What is the meaning of history? One answer is that history is determined as part of a mechanistic universe. Another answer is that history is a linear stream of events linked by cause and effect but without purpose. Yet another answer is that history is meaningless because life is absurd.

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ How does the Christian Theist answer the six questions?
- ▶ Question: Why is there something rather than nothing?
- ▶ Answer: There is an infinite-personal God who has created the universe out of nothing.
  
- ▶ Question: How do you explain human nature?
- ▶ Answer: Man was originally created good in God's image, but chose to sin and thus infected all of humanity with what is called a "sin nature." So man has been endowed with value by his creator, but his negative behavior is in league with his nature.

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ Question: What happens to a person at death?
- ▶ Answer: Death is either the gate to life with God or to eternal separation from Him. The destination is dependent upon the response we give to God's provision for our sinfulness.
  
- ▶ Question: How do you determine what is right and wrong?
- ▶ Answer: The guidelines for conduct are revealed by God.

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ Question: How do you know that you know?
- ▶ Answer: Reason and experience can be legitimate teachers, but a transcendent source is necessary. We know some things only because we are told by God through the Bible.
  
- ▶ Question: What is the meaning of history?
- ▶ Answer: History is a linear and meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for man.

# Six Worldview Questions

- ▶ Christian Theism had a long history in Western culture. This does not mean that all individuals who have lived in Western culture have been Christians. It simply means that this world view was dominant; it was the most influential. And this was true even among non-Christians. This is no longer valid.
- ▶ Paul's admonition to the believers in ancient Colossae couldn't be more contemporary or helpful in light of our discussion. He wrote: See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (Col. 2:8).
- ▶ **Next Sunday – Lesson 89 – Defining Worldviews: Conclusion**