

Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

LESSON 84 – DEFINING WORLDVIEWS – DEISM AND NATURALISM

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 399-451

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Worldview

- ▶ Dr. Ligon Duncan has defined a worldview as “a set of fundamental assumptions about the most important issues in life.”
- ▶ As Christians, we should have what is referred to as a Biblical worldview, or a Christian worldview. Sadly though many in the church neglect the Word of God and live in ignorance when it comes to the truth given to us about the foundation of the world. Some have secular worldviews, worldly worldviews and values that reject the truth of God's Word. How can a professed follower of Christ hold to a secular worldview? It's simple really. It happens when we neglect the truth of God's Word and lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6) instead of gaining understanding and wisdom from the Word of God.

Deism

- ▶ Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. – Isaiah 46:9
- ▶ A good summary of deism tells us that this worldview predicates a first cause, a divine maker who made this world like a clock and set it running and then let it go and left it all alone so that he might go and do whatever he was interested in doing, and he no longer interacts in this world in any way. The laws he set in motion are still in motion until they run down, and creation comes to the end as it was designed.
- ▶ This presents a very impersonal view of God doesn't it? There is no need to understand or know Him other than to study science to know what He has created. In this scheme, a better understanding of the world around us will help us manipulate things for our benefit. Beside scientific study, there is no salvation, no need for accountability, no personal responsibility beyond what we owe our fellow man. In fact, the truth, or knowledge, in this system is found through scientific discovery.

Deism

- ▶ This worldview was very widely accepted and taught in the 1600-1700s. As such it has affected most worldviews that come after it. In fact, if we look, we can see elements of Deism in our daily lives.
- ▶ The key element in this worldview is human reason.
- ▶ 1. There is one God who created the world but is no longer involved in it.
- ▶ 2. There is an objective difference between right and wrong.
- ▶ 3. It is the duty of mankind to support what is right.
- ▶ 4. Humans are immortal beings.
- ▶ 5. Our “eternity” is determined by how we live in this life here and now.

Deism

- ▶ How do we determine then what is real and what is right in this system?
Cause and effect.
- ▶ It is man's ability to do what is right, that which brings about a positive effect, and not the working of God to save the sinner, that determines one's state in the next life.
- ▶ In this worldview the world is not fallen or marred. It is winding down, running in its intended entropic path. And we must try and make a positive difference in this world in order to have a good time in the next life. The meaning of life then? To be the best man or woman that we can be. It is cause and effect so we must do our part to make the world a better place.

A Biblical Response to Deism

- ▶ The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God so much that man is left without any excuse, they are not sufficient to provide that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diverse manners to reveal Himself, and to declare His will to His church. – 2LBCF, Chapter 1
- ▶ So the Bible is not just a useful myth. It is the Word of God, infallible, inerrant, inspired, and profitable for everything that we need to be thoroughly equipped for every good work in our service to God and each other.
- ▶ So let us critically evaluate the claims of Deism in the light of Scripture. We will examine a few Scriptures to make the points necessary to show how bankrupt a system Deism really is.

A Biblical Response to Deism

- ▶ The Purpose of Creation: Why did God create the world? To manifest His own glory.
- ▶ The heavens declare the glory of God – Psalm 19:1-6
- ▶ Romans 1:20-22 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

A Biblical Response to Deism

- ▶ The Personal Nature of God: The truth is that God is involved actively in the world around us. He has not set the world off spinning without any interaction at all. We see from the Bible that if it was not for the active involvement of God in every detail of His creation then the world would not and could not exist. Consider these verses as they reveal to us the very personal and involved nature of God in His creation:
- ▶ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:15-17
- ▶ He made all things. He is involved in all things. They were made by Him for Him, and even in Him all things consist. He actively holds creation together so that it might complete His purposes for His own glory.

A Biblical Response to Deism

- ▶ The Purpose of Divine Revelation: God has given us the Word in order to reveal Himself to us, of that we can be sure. It is the testimony of Scripture. See Galatians 1:11-12, Ephesians 3:1-7, Hebrews 1:1-4. These are but a few of the verses that show us why we have been given the Scriptures – to reveal to us the God who created us for His purposes so that we can come to know Him and fellowship with Him.
- ▶ The Purpose of the Gospel: God is a personal God who has revealed Himself to us through the Incarnation of His Son and the giving and preservation of His Word so that we might know Him, love Him, serve Him, obey Him, and glorify Him. The god of Deism is a false god, made by the imaginations of fallen men, a powerless impersonal god.

Naturalism

- ▶ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1
- ▶ After learning about the elements and deficiencies of Deism we are moving to the system that grew out of Deism, and in fact was fashioned as a natural (no pun intended) conclusion from those who held faithfully to a Deistic outlook.
- ▶ Deism appealed to human reason and ability to the point that by the time the next generations arrived upon the scene, they had every reason to be so dependent upon human logic and philosophy that they asked a very pertinent question about the elemental foundations of the Deistic worldview. “Why do we need God?” If we can look to nature for our answers, then why do we even need to believe that there is a God behind it all? The foundation had eroded so far as to lead to the idea that there was no God.
- ▶ They did not replace the Creator with the creation, they deduced from their own reasonings that there was no Creator and that the creation is all that is. Matter has existed forever and nothing ever came from nothing.

Naturalism

- ▶ Naturalism summarized states that we can take everything that Deism gives and remove the idea of this God who created things, this first cause, and the philosophy works just fine. Matter and energy is all that exists, the outcome of cause and effect is based purely upon chance, truth is really just scientific proof, and there are in reality no morals or values. As Carl Sagan stated, “The cosmos is all that is, ever was, or ever will be.”
- ▶ The foundation for this grid through which reality is viewed is rooted in matter. Stuff. The cosmos. There is no supernatural, no divine, no miracles, no exceptions to natural laws and science. To know truth is to know the scientific data. Experiments prove truth.
- ▶ Scripture is not truth. Only what can be tested and observed scientifically can be qualified as truth.

Naturalism

- ▶ So what does naturalism say about the nature and character of mankind? Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? In this worldview, people are simply machines. Complex machines, formed by matter and chance. And they have the nerve to accuse Calvinists of making people robots! In their view the whole closed system we call the universe is one big machine formed by chance.
- ▶ There is no design, only evolution by chance though cause and effect.
- ▶ There is no purpose. There is no meaning. There is no order, goal, or reason.
- ▶ What about right and wrong? For the naturalist there is no such distinction as right and wrong.

A Biblical Response to Naturalism

- ▶ So how does the Bible address this worldview? What Scriptures can we point to that deconstruct this meaningless mess of matter? The Bible destroys Naturalism from the beginning, yes, the beginning. From Genesis 1:1 we read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
- ▶ See Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6; John 1:3; Romans 4:17; 1 Corinthians 1:28; Hebrews 11:3
- ▶ Psalm 24:1-5 declares for us this truth when it comes to determining the reasons God created: The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

A Biblical Response to Naturalism

- ▶ Instead of having no difference between right and wrong other than personal perspective we also see that the Bible teaches that while men may do what is “right in his own eyes,” ultimately “the Lord weighs the heart” (Proverbs 21:2). God decides what is right and who is right. In fact, “the way of the fool is right in his own eyes” (Proverbs 12:15).
- ▶ “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1).
- ▶ So it is no wonder then that a naturalist says there is no God and then moves immediately into the belief that whatever he decides is right, is right.
- ▶ Is this world really driven by chance? Or is God in control?

A Biblical Response to Naturalism

- ▶ God is in control. He is absolutely sovereign. Consider:
- ▶ Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." – 1 Chron. 16:31
- ▶ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. – 1 Chron. 29:11
- ▶ God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. – Psalm 47:8
- ▶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" – Revelation 19:6
- ▶ He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. -Psalm 66:7
- ▶ The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all. – Psalm 103:19

A Biblical Response to Naturalism

- ▶ What starts with Darwinian evolution, survival of the fittest, and natural selection, moves on to political and religious pluralism, and to outright lies – such as the one that says that it took millions of years for life to come to be on earth as we know it.
- ▶ This worldview lends itself to underpinning the false religion that is being forced upon our children in government schools even today.
- ▶ We wonder why kids think no one cares – when there is nothing to care about in this bankrupt system of thought and this immoral view of reality.
- ▶ The truth is that as soon as a worldview removes God it has in fact removed reason and will soon result in meaninglessness.

A Biblical Response to Naturalism

- ▶ Naturalism is unnatural. Has it affected the way you view the world around you? Do you think things happen by chance? Or that things are just cause and effect? Are you tempted to take the word of atheistic scientists over the very God-breathed Scriptures when it comes to explaining how and why we are here? Then it is necessary to use the Word of God to purge our worldview. Get the rot of Naturalism out of there. God, the supernatural Creator of this world is where it all starts.
- ▶ “In the beginning God.....” Do we look to Him first, or last? Do we pray first or last? Do we spend time in the Word first or last in your day? Is God first? Don’t chance it! Obey Him. Serve Him. Honor and glorify Him. Start everyday with Him first.