

Understanding the Christian Worldview

A Word about Worldviews

Simply put a worldview is like a pair of glasses through which one understands reality. For example, if one holds to a naturalistic worldview (nature is all that there is) then when he hears of a miracle he will always seek to find a natural explanation. This is because from the naturalist's perspective the laws of nature are never broken. Thus the adherent to the worldview of naturalism may find himself going to remarkable lengths to propose fantastic theories of how things came to be and no matter how unlikely his theory is to be correct he will always prefer it without even considering a supernatural cause.

Worldviews are powerful because of their inherent assumptive nature. When we work on a worldview we are dealing with the foundational issues that will in turn support everything else. For example, if we believe as part of our basis for knowledge that only people who have a PhD are worth listening to then we will exclude *a priori* (ahead of time) everyone else (including Jesus) from our understanding of a particular subject. Thus, it is perhaps even more important to have a correct worldview than it is to have the right facts.

It is a massive task to come to the "correct" worldview. Even once we arrive at it, who is to say that our conclusion is the best one? Thus, this course will not attempt to develop from scratch a cohesive worldview by taking into account psychology, philosophy, history, science, and anthropology. Rather, we will seek to understand the worldview of the perfect man himself, Jesus of Nazareth. In doing this it is our goal to see the world as he saw it and so to be enlightened by the one who claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life."

The Problem of Finding the Correct Worldview

Even as we seek to understand a Christian worldview we are immediately made aware of the fact that there is not one Christian worldview. The Amish assert that we are to live without electricity or other modern technologies. The Jehovah's Witnesses say that unless one joins their organization he cannot be saved. The Baptists maintain that unless one is an orthodox Christian then he is damned to eternal torment at the moment of death. The problem is that there is no consensus among modern Christians what the true worldview is.

This is why we are not going to compare one Christian worldview to another. For example we will not contrast the Roman Catholic worldview with the Assemblies of God worldview. Instead we will seek to understand what Jesus' worldview was as it is indicated in the four Gospels. I believe that this is the key to unlocking the correct way to see the world. Even so, in order to understand what Jesus' worldview was will take quite a bit of background work regarding the history of the Jewish people up until the time of Christ as well as various cultural movements

that existed in his own day. However, our labor will surely payoff once we move to look at Jesus words and deeds. Suddenly, the gospel Jesus proclaimed along with his miracles and teachings on ethics will shine with a whole new vibrancy as they are seen from the perspective of one who shared his worldview.

Our Method for This Course

In order to begin to think like Jesus thought we need to work through the major themes of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). First we will familiarize ourselves with early Judaism which includes the Genesis account of the creation, the formation of the Abrahamic people, the rise of the Israeli Nation, the role of the prophets, and the demise of the nation at the hands of the Babylonians. Then we will look at Second Temple Judaism which includes the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem, the resistance to Hellenization, the formation of various sects, the Hasmonean Dynasty, and the beginning of Roman occupation. Thirdly we will survey the religiopolitical scene of the first century and then compare and contrast the ministry of John the Baptist with them. Now, once we have our ears tuned to hear the various chords in the world of the 1st century we will listen carefully to the melody that Jesus makes. We will listen to Jesus words as if for the first time and see how he accepts certain aspects of the worldview at the time and challenges others. It is our goal to understand Jesus as the original twelve understood him. Let us construct our worldview by viewing the world through the eyes of 1st century Palestinian Jew who has accepting Jesus' radical message about the kingdom of God. Much time will be spent looking through the Gospels in order to understand what Jesus was all about, how he talked, what he did, and most importantly, the reasons behind his words and deeds. Due to a lack in time we will not be looking at the rest of the New Testament, nor will we be considering Paul's contribution to Christianity.

Creation Theology

- I. Matter
 - a. Gnostic Beliefs
 - b. Creation account sees world as “all good”
- II. Mankind
 - a. Plato’s allegory of the cave
 - b. Monistic anthropology
 - i. Dust + Breath = Living Being
 - ii. At death, return to dust
- III. Purpose
 - a. Reign over the creation (glory that many had)
 - b. Primordial commands
- IV. The fall
 - a. Degeneration
 - i. Of universe
 - ii. Of woman
 - iii. Of man
 - b. Promise of redemption
 - i. proto-evangelion
 - ii. Cain—the great disappointment
- V. Rapid Depravity
 - a. Conditions before the flood
 - b. Noah found grace
 - c. Worldwide destruction
 - d. Changes to environment
 - e. Carnivorous
 - f. Noahic laws