

Distinctives of a Biblical Worldview



Our Daily Bread University
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Who is right?



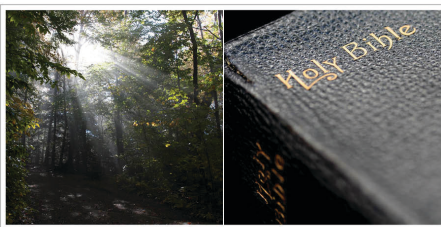
In our multicultural global age, tolerance seems to be an important virtue. Many believe that it is arrogant to claim that one's own worldview is right and that the others are wrong. Yet in looking at the alternatives, could there be a third option? Like the analogy of the blind men and the elephant, might it be possible that every worldview is at least partially right? Even more important, is it possible that one worldview could actually bring together individual parts of the other views?

The Bible and Reality

Lunar-mission astronauts who saw the earth rising over the surface of the moon said it made them feel there was an intelligent spiritual reality behind it. The Bible offers a basis for such universal human intuition when it says of our Creator:

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 (Rom. 1:20).

According to the Scriptures, we can all see God's divine power and attributes by looking at the design and beauty of nature.



The biblical view, however, goes on to make the point that "nature watching" alone is not enough to discover the Intelligence behind what we see. The Bible claims that the Designer has revealed Himself to us through its own inspired record.

Speaking of the Bible as prophecy, Peter said:

Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

Here the Bible claims that its authors communicated knowledge

that is not merely of human origin. Peter said that God Himself empowered His authors to write down what He intended.

According to both Old and New Testaments, there is a spiritual reality behind the universe we see:

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (Heb. 11:3).

But the Bible goes beyond the idea that there is a Designer behind the cosmos. It also provides a window into a realm of the spirit where God, heaven, and angels are part of a greater reality. Concerning this, the apostle Paul wrote:

[Through Christ] 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 (Col. 1:16).

The Bible describes the existence of both physical and spiritual realms. The first is open to the five senses. The second requires divine revelation to learn of its reality.

The Bible and Identity

The various perspectives of major worldviews suggest that knowing who we are isn't that easy. We are complex and, at times, contradictory beings. Accordingly, we have built institutions of commerce, developed medicines to bring health to millions, and launched space probes. Yet as a race, we have also built concentration camps, used instruments of torture, and implemented policies of genocide. Why would there be such a contradiction in attitudes and behavior?

The biblical worldview offers an explanation for this apparent contradiction. The Bible indicates that by virtue of our being made in God's image, we derive our identity and moral conscience from our Creator (Gen. 1:26). Many biblical scholars believe the image of God includes reason, emotion, will, self-consciousness, creativity, and conscience. These attributes have enabled us to pursue the beautiful and creative aspects of the arts and sciences.

But the unfolding drama of the Bible also describes and chronicles

the destructive capacity of our hearts. In fact, its pages are filled with those who did both great and terrible things. David, the shepherd king, wrote beautiful psalms, showed courage in battle, and was even called a man after God's own heart. But the same King David also committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:1-17).

The Bible is a disturbingly realistic book that recognizes the human capacity for evil. Jesus Christ, the most loving and accepting person who has ever lived, said:

Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man (Mt. 15:19-20).

The biblical worldview, therefore, recognizes more than our conscience and love for what is beautiful and good. It also shows that we are morally flawed and prone to misuse our capabilities as people made in the likeness of God. But where did this negative moral bent come from?



The Bible and Origins

Genesis has been called the book of beginnings. It introduces us to the God who created our first parents and entrusted them with an ideal garden environment. Although Adam and Eve were completely innocent, their moral character had not yet been tested. So, according to Genesis:

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Upon reading such an account, it seems obvious to ask, "Why would God want to provide a moral test for Adam and Eve in the first place? Why would there even be the choice of evil?"

To answer that we need to understand the backstory of Scripture. Earlier in God's created order, Satan, a high-ranking angel, chose to rebel against God's authority. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 seem to indicate that Satan was cast down from heaven and took on the form of a serpent in order to tempt the first man and woman. By cleverly casting doubt on God's motives, the devil tempted the first couple to distrust their Creator and do the one thing He had





told them not to do (Gen. 3:6-8).

There were consequences to this initial act of independence. Adam and Eve experienced alienation from each other, their environment, and their Creator. The personal friendship they had shared with their Creator was now broken. Yet as God described the consequences of their disobedience, He made a mysterious prediction. Looking back, we can now see that God was planning, through the future offspring of Eve, to send a Deliverer to defeat the evil one and offer hope to the world (Gen. 3:15). But who do the Scriptures reveal this Deliverer to be?

The Bible and Meaning

Those who mourn the meaninglessness of life have struck upon the heart of the matter. If all we are to do during our lives is experience pleasure and pain, only to be extinguished at death, then truly, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2).

But according to the Bible, when we see what God did to bring us back to Himself, everything can begin to fall into place. If Jesus is not just a teacher from Nazareth, but actually our Creator, the Son of God, Mediator, Savior, King of kings, Lord of lords, and ruler of the age to come, then everything has meaning in relation to Him. When we see Christ as God’s offer of atonement, life, hope, peace, and immeasurable love, then everything we think or do is a step toward or away from Him.

The Bible and Ethics

Considering the biblical worldview as true resonates with what we know about the brightest and darkest sides of our human nature. It should help us to understand why we have an inner sense that some things really are right or wrong. That’s what the apostle Paul reasoned when he wrote:

When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them (Rom. 2:14-15).

“The law” that Paul referred to is contained in what we know

**Everlasting fellowship
with God requires
a decision.**



today as the law God revealed to Moses and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. It was the standard a Jew was bound to obey. But even though Gentiles weren't exposed to this divinely revealed moral guideline, they recognized right and wrong by their very nature. The law written in tablets of stone, in the Scriptures, and then finally personified perfectly and fully in the person of Jesus is what the Bible describes as a basis for understanding the morality of personal or social choices.

The Bible and the Future

The biblical worldview offers hope in a life to come. Because it tells us that we are made in the image of God, it offers us reason to believe that our identity and personality are eternal.

Yet, according to the Scriptures, everlasting fellowship with God after death is not automatic. It requires a decision. For those who respond to the forgiveness offered in Christ, the promise of eternal life will be realized. For those who reject it, a place of existence away from communion with God awaits them after death.

Yet the hope offered by Christ's work of redemption is not just limited to personal survival beyond the grave. The Bible tells us that the future of the observable universe is also tied to the sovereign work of God in Christ. Because Christ is the Creator of our material world, He has the power to restore what has been lost and to renew the goodness of His original creation.

Revelation, the last book in the Bible, tells us that Christ will one day say, *"Behold, I make all things new"* (Rev. 21:5). The word translated "new" carries the idea of an innovation based on a form that has preceded it. This remaking of heaven and earth will have a familiarity to what we already know and is reflected in the words,

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1).

Is Each Worldview Partially Right?

If the biblical distinctives provide the most consistent and inclusive explanation for life as we know it, how would such a perspective relate to other worldviews? Is it possible that what

the Bible affirms as a whole shows up in part within the other views we have seen?