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AMERICA'S WORLDVIEW VS. THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

The first chapter on my website, www.glennbrownministries.com, is titled "Worldview," and I encourage you to read it. That chapter starts with the following story: *It was the first session of a seminar I was holding in my local church. I began expressing my belief in a number of basic teachings from the Bible: there is an omnipotent God, a devil; angels and demons; the spiritual world can and does impact people's physical health; Christ can and does heal people today. At the end of the session, a lady who identified herself as a nurse expressed dismay at the content of my teaching. A summary of what I understood her to say was, "I have attended church most of my life, and I have never heard some of the things you talked about. I can't believe that you expect us to take all of these things seriously, much less literally!"*

I can't relate that experience without laughing, not at that lady but with her. Because this is a struggle that we all have, or at least that I had. I can remember trying to make sense of the Bible, trying to understand if Christianity was really true or if it was a collection of ancient myths.

We are raised in a culture that is antithetical to the biblical worldview. We are inculcated with the view that **materialism, rationalism, secular humanism, moral relativism, and evolution** are unassailable facts. They are taught from kindergarten through public school, college, and university, as the only acceptable views. Anyone who presents an alternative view such as creationism is in danger of losing the esteem and respect of his peers, or even of losing his job. I love to watch science and nature shows on National Geographic, PBS, and Discovery Channel, but it bothers me that the Western worldview is always presented as scientific fact, truth, and reality. Their attitude is: "All scientists and intelligent people agree with this perspective."

So when we become Christians we have a problem. We have absorbed this worldview and probably never questioned it. But something has occurred in our lives that has awakened us to another view of reality. We have discovered that God is real, that He loves us and is rescuing us from our sin and selfishness, and that the Bible is supposed to be believed as truth. So how do we deal with these contradictory views? One thing we do is to compartmentalize. At work or school or with our friends, if someone mentions the story of Moses parting the Red Sea and they ridicule the idea, we might keep quiet or agree that of course that is just a mythological story. Likewise if Jesus walking on the sea or healing blind eyes or raising the dead is mentioned. Obviously, those things didn't really happen.

When we are at church and the pastor teaches on those subjects, we listen attentively to receive the "spiritual" truths, but we understand that those stories are just symbolic, figurative, and metaphorical. When Adam and Eve are mentioned, we interpret them as representing mankind, but not as literal, historical people. When the serpent, the devil, is mentioned, we interpret that as the evil in people, but certainly not to be taken literally. When creation is mentioned, we know that is a symbolic story, and if God created the world he certainly used evolution, because evolution is a proven fact.

We want to be true to our faith, but we can't deny "reality," so we are kind of schizophrenic. It's very confusing and uncomfortable. Let me read from Lee Strobel's book, The Case for a Creator, Page 31: He starts with a quote from an atheist, evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr: *No educated person any longer questions the validity of the so-called theory of evolution, which we now know to be a simple fact.* (There you are. He says that the "so-called theory of evolution" is no longer to be regarded as a theory but as a fact, and if you are an educated, intelligent person, you will not question it.) But the quote from Mr. Mayr is followed by a quote by another scientist, Larry Hatfield, in Science Digest: *Scientists who utterly reject evolution may be one of our fastest-growing minorities.*

Then Lee Strobel tells about a meeting of one hundred scientists in October, 2001: "There were one hundred of them - - biologists, chemists, zoologists, physicists, anthropologists, molecular biologists, bio-engineers, organic chemists, geologists, astrophysicists, and other scientists. Many of these were Ph.D's, including Nobel Prize winners, and their doctorates came from such prestigious universities as Cambridge, Stanford, Cornell, Yale, Princeton, Purdue, Duke, Michigan, U.C., Texas, Colorado, Berkeley, etc. Among them was the director of the Center for Quantum Chemistry, and scientists from the Smithsonian Institute, the Los Alamos National Laboratory, etc. And they wanted the world to know one thing: They are skeptical about the theory of evolution."

Not all of those scientists were Christians, but they were all in agreement about "Intelligent Design." That is, they have concluded that the evidence is irrefutable that a massive intellect (God?) designed this universe, and especially designed life.

One fact that they agree on is that "information always indicates intelligence." For instance, when ancient stones or tablets with hieroglyphics or writing have been discovered, it has always been assumed that someone with intelligence inscribed that information. Historians and scientists have never looked at those tablets and concluded that "Those tablets just 'happened;' that writing just occurred by natural processes." Yet that is exactly what scientists have concluded about the information that is found in nature. The best example has to do with the DNA found in cells. Six feet of DNA is coiled inside each one of the body's one hundred trillion cells, and it provides the genetic information necessary to create all of the proteins out of which our bodies are built. Each cell contains more information than is in a full set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. The one hundred scientists quoted in Lee Strobel's book (and a great multitude more) do not believe it is reasonable to assume that all this information just "happened."

Have you ever heard about that meeting in 2001 and the many scientists that don't believe in evolution? I don't remember it being reported by the Associated Press, or specials about it on NBC or PBS or Discovery Channel. I believe they (those who are married to the Western worldview) have a vested interest in believing as they do, because the Western worldview denies the reality of God, and they are therefore not accountable to God. If life is a cosmic accident and we accidentally evolved from the primordial soup (by the way, scientists have discovered that there was no primordial soup), and we are going to die like any other amoeba and return to the dirt, and there is no meaning to any of it, then we certainly don't have to worry about how we live.

So how are we Christians supposed to regard the Bible, Adam and Eve, the serpent/devil, creation, miracles, and Jesus and His resurrection?

- A collection of ancient myths and legends?
- Science?
- Allegory?
- Poetry?
- Literal stories?
- Figurative, symbolic stories?

Are we supposed to commit intellectual suicide and swallow all these stories? Consider the creation story: Genesis 1:1 says, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . .* Darwinian evolution says, "In the beginning there was nothing, then it exploded, and everything just happened." My view is that the Darwinian theory is so irrational that it is utter nonsense. It is a fairy tale. It is not scientific. Science is demonstrable and reproducible. The Darwinian concept of creation is a myth, a faith, an expression of unsupportable mental constructs. These "scientists" jump from science to imaginary theories without ever making a distinction.

Consider a few things about the beginning of the universe in the Bible:

- **Six days of creation** - Genesis 1:1 - 2:3: The Hebrew word for day is *yom*, and it can refer to (1) daylight, (2) to a 24-hour period, or (3) to an unspecified time period. *Yom* is used in these three manners throughout the Old Testament. While it is true that the God who created the cosmos by an act of His will could have done so in six 24-hour days, or six seconds, I personally believe that the six days represent six ages or epochs of indeterminate length.
- **On Day one God created light** (Gen. 1:3), but the sun and moon were not created until Day four (Gen. 1:14). While the Bible isn't "science" in the way we think about science, yet I have wondered about this. Part of the explanation may be set forth in physicist Steven Weinberg's book, The First Three Minutes: "Within the tiniest split second, the temperature hit a hundred thousand million degrees Centigrade. The matter rushing apart consisted of such elementary particles as electrons, positrons, neutrinos, and also **photons. The universe was filled with light!**"
- **The sun and moon** are not named but called "*The greater and lesser lights.*" This was because, apparently, the pagan nations worshipped the sun and moon and their names were also the names of the gods they connected with the sun and moon. The Bible wants us to know that the sun and moon were created by God, they are not gods to be worshipped. The stars were likewise put in place by God, and they are not gods that guide our lives or give us information.

▪ **Adam and Eve.** On Day six, God said, "*Let us make man in our image.*" Note, first, that God, *Elohim*, is plural (*us* and *our*). Christians hold that this represents the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it may also represent the plural to denote majesty, or God speaking with the heavenly court of angels.

▪ **The word "man" in Hebrew is *adam*.** To me this means that Adam represented humanity, but I also believe that he was a literal man. Adam was taken from the dust of the ground. **The word "ground" is *adamah***, so the earth is the reference point for humans, who in death return to dust.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, *(God) has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.* (NIV) It is clear that the universe did not just "happen," anymore than the computer on which I am writing just "happened." God was and is the Creator. Not just any god, but the God of the Bible, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But God did not tell us the details of how and when He created everything. He has created the universe so that man can discover many things, but many things will always remain hidden.

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

There is hardly anything in the Bible that is not a matter of argument between different churches and denominations: The end times - the rapture, the thousand year millennium, the second coming, the tribulation, etc. Baptism - infant, believers, immersion, sprinkling, etc. Communion - wine or grape juice, bread or wafer, every week or month or year, the mass, only for church members or for everyone, etc. The baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit. Creation - in six days or six ages, literal or symbolic Adam and Eve, instant creation or by evolution, etc. Literal angels and demons. The list could go on and on. These are not matters over which Christians should divide. We can and should have our individual convictions, but we should not try to impose our beliefs on others.

There is a list of foundational beliefs on which orthodox Christians agree, and these are contained in the **Apostles' Creed**:

- **God is Creator.** *I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*
- **Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior and Lord.** *And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord.*
- **Virgin birth.** *Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.*
- **His death.** *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.*
- **His resurrection.** *The third day he rose from the dead.*
- **His return as judge and savior.** *From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*
- **The Holy Spirit.** *I believe in the Holy Spirit.*
- **The universal church, forgiveness, resurrection of the body, and everlasting life.**

These are the non-negotiable parts of the Christian faith. But what if, in all honesty, you are not sure that you believe in some of these things? Does that make your Christianity suspect? Is God angry at you? I don't think so.

Remember that it is the "Christian faith" that we are a part of, not the Christian facts, although we certainly believe that the Bible is factual and not imaginary.

We are saved by God's grace through faith. We receive salvation and righteousness through faith. *If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart.....you will be saved. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* Etc. How do we obtain this faith that the Bible is talking about? By revelation from God. Christianity is not a lot of information or a list of Bible teachings. Believing the Apostles Creed is futile if it is just mental belief. It must be believed in the heart (the soul, the innermost being) so that it becomes transformation, not just information.

The Bible says that "*Faith comes by hearing - the Word of God.*" As you hear or read the Bible again and again, God speaks directly to the heart and reveals truth to you. This is not on a natural but a spiritual plane. This may happen instantly or as a process. Also, I believe that God's revelation comes as a result of experiences. For instance, when you received Christ as your Savior, you immediately started "seeing" God and everything (the things contained in the Apostles' Creed and many more things) in a different light. Before you received Christ, you didn't really understand much about the reality and destructiveness of sin, about judgment, about the grace of God, and many other things.

BOOKS TO EXPAND OUR FAITH

If you are serious about the Lord, it is imperative that you read and study the book, the **Bible**. Frankly, this generation of Christians is for the most part biblically illiterate. If you are a serious Christian, how can you not read the Bible? Why is it not exciting and thrilling to you? When I became a Christian, I started reading the Bible voraciously. I have never stopped. After a period of time I started on a Bible reading plan, and read through the Bible every year for more than 50 years. I do not consider myself to be a Bible scholar or expert. I never learned the original languages, Hebrew and Greek. But I have never stopped reading and studying the Bible and books about the Bible. (I must confess that I have always found it easier to read the Bible than to live out the things it tells me to do, but God has had mercy on me and is helping me to live more like a Christian.)

What if you have questions about the trustworthiness of the Bible? Read **Evidence that Demands a Verdict**, by Josh McDowell. And ask God to give you more faith.

I also recommend the book, **The Case for a Creator**, by Lee Strobel, as mentioned above. Lee was a journalist, a university educated atheist, and when his wife was converted to Christ he started studying the Christian faith in order to prove that it was fallacious. That was a dangerous thing to do, because God converted his heart.

You might also read, **I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist**, by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek. They are both university professors and Ph.D.'s. Mr. Geisler has written over 40 books, they have spoken in all 50 states and 25 countries, have debated scientists and evolutionists on university campuses and on television, and they cover the ground with physicists, biologists, etc. A very interesting book.

Ultimately, as I said before, our relationship with God through Christ is dependent on faith. Jesus said you have to become like a little child, and that is humbling. Remember that First John says that walking with God requires (1) belief in Jesus Christ (2) obeying him and living a life of righteousness (3) living a life of love.

John 7:17 is a key verse, when Jesus said, *If anyone wills to do His will, he will know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God...*(NKJV) The NIV makes it clearer: *If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God.* The Amplified is clearer still: *If any man desires to do His will (God's pleasure), he will know (have the needed illumination to recognize, and can tell for himself) whether the teaching is from God.* This simply means that a person can never discover whether the Bible and Christianity is true or simply a fable until he is willing to bow before God and submit his life to Him. Then you will know in your heart.

The name *Jacob* means "*supplanter* or *cheater*," and that described the life of Jacob the patriarch. But there came a time in his life when he wrestled all night with the Angel of the Lord (the preincarnate Christ), and a great transformation happened in his heart. God then changed his name to *Israel*, "One who wrestles with God and prevails." Since we are a product of our society, and since we have a fallen nature, we may have a lot of doubt and unbelief about Christianity and the Bible. God is not put off by all of that. But He wants us to wrestle with our unbelief, wrestle with our doubts, and wrestle with God - - until we prevail.

BEWARE WHEN PEOPLE PUT YOU ON A PEDESTAL, YOU MAKE A GREAT TARGET!

Acts 14 reports the time when Paul and Barnabas healed a man who had been a cripple from birth. The people of Lystra were so amazed that they said Paul and Barnabas were gods and started worshiping them. But when the apostles heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, saying (paraphrase): *What are you doing? We didn't heal that man, God did. We are just humans like you. Don't worship us, worship the true God who is the creator. **The next day*** (or perhaps two or three days later), some Jews from other cities came to Lystra and spewed out hatred and lies, and - *The multitude stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.*

I repeat: Beware when people put you on a pedestal, you make a great target.

SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

Romans 13:1-2 says, *Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority rebels against what God has instituted.*

One of the strongest convictions that I have is about this principle of authority. I have the honor of being an elder in my church, but I would no more say or do anything that usurped or undermined Pastor Kirk's authority than I would set off firecrackers during a worship service. During my years of preaching in scores of churches in Mexico, I always checked with the pastor to see exactly what he expected me to do. If there was some question about whether he might not agree with certain parts of my doctrine, I either got his approval regarding what I was going to teach or I did not teach in that area. Obviously, we did not go to a lot of churches that were too contrarian for us.

Lines of authority are delineated in scripture: Husbands and wives, parents and children, church leaders and members, government and citizens. An exception to submitting to the authority of government is described in Acts 4 when Peter and John were arrested by the Roman authorities for preaching Christ and were forbidden to speak about Him anymore. Peter and John were respectful of authority, they did not foment a rebellion, they simply declared that they would continue to obey God rather than man and were willing to suffer the consequences for the sake of Christ.

I heard a story that describes what our attitude should be toward authority. A big church in a certain city held a meeting that drew hundreds of pastors and leaders from around the country. During lunch break about a dozen pastors went to a restaurant and started to put two or three tables together, but a new waitress walked up and said, "Hey, you can't do that!" A pastor who lived in the city and was familiar with this restaurant said, "But they allow us to do this all the time." The waitress said, "Nobody told me you could do it." Some of the pastors started to get angry and said they should call the manager, but the senior pastor among them said, "Wait a minute, guys, this lady is the authority in this setting, and I think we should do as she says." So they apologized to the waitress and sat at separate tables. That reflects the spirit of Christ. You can see what they would have communicated to that waitress and to the other patrons if they had acted like Christian big-shots and made a big scene.

Let us seek to be Christ-like and submit to authority, and with a gentle, humble spirit.

THE LAMB OF GOD

1 Peter 1:19 says that the ransom that was paid for our salvation *was not mere silver and gold. It was the precious blood of Christ*, the sinless, spotless, Lamb of God.

The Old Covenant (Lev. 1, Deut. 15) describes what the people did for the forgiveness of their sins. Once each year they brought a lamb to the priest to be sacrificed. It had to be a flawless lamb, so the priest carefully examined the lamb's fur and skin, eyes, teeth and feet. Only if it was perfect could it be sacrificed. Note:

the priest did not examine the man but the lamb! If God examined you and me, we could never, never pass the test. But there was a *perfect Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world*, that passed the test. He takes our sin, we take His righteousness. Thanks be to God!

God Bless
Glenn

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