

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

Developing a Biblical Worldview

How a Biblical Worldview Affects Our View on Morality and God's Natural Law

Introduction: This, the third in our series of sermons on the development of a Biblical worldview, focuses upon the disciplines of Ethics and Law. By "the Law" we do not mean the Mosaic Law given to Israel in the Old Covenant; instead, we speak of the Natural Law that God has made evident by His creation and our conscience within us.

- I. Ethics: What is Right?
 - A. Ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.
 1. Morals relate to the principles of right or wrong behavior
 2. There must be an absolute if there is to be a moral order and real values.
 - B. Christian morality is founded on the belief that an absolute moral order exists outside of, and yet is somehow inscribed into, Man's very being.
 - C. God's moral law is absolute and unchanging. God always hates evil and loves good, and the Bible is of supreme importance because it tells us of the difference between the two.
 - D. Christian ethics is inseparable from theology because it is grounded in the character of God.
- II. The Law: Who Makes the Rules?
 - A. Law is a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforceable by authority.
 - B. God's general and special revelation together provide enough information for people to implement a legal system that need not depend upon the wisdom of sinful human beings.
 - C. The three perspectives of Natural Law:
 1. Divine Natural Law—the belief that law must conform to the commands that were laid down and inspired by God who governs according to principles of compassion, truth, and justice.
 2. Secular Natural Law—replaces the divine laws of God with the physical, biological, and behavioral laws of nature as understood by human reason.
 3. Historical Natural Law—holds to the view that law must be made to conform with the well established, but unwritten, customs, traditions, and experiences that have evolved over the course of history.
 - D. Divine Law consist of five basic precepts:
 1. The source of all divine natural law is the character and nature of God.
 2. The moral order proceeds from and reflects the character of God—His holiness, justice, truth, love, and mercy.
 3. We are created in God's image and thus are significant.
 4. When Jesus took on human form, human life assumed even greater significance. (John 1: 14)
 5. God through Jesus Christ will judge the whole human race according to His standard of good and evil. (II Corinthians 5: 10)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
Romans 1:18-21

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ...
Romans 2:14-15

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."
Matthew 7:12

Conclusion: Do we build the foundation of our worldview with respect to our ethics and law upon the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ or upon the sinking sand of Secular Humanism? This is a real choice that each one of us makes whether we realize it or not.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) How would you define ethics in simple terms? How does it differ—or does it—from morality?
- 2.) Why is an absolute moral order needed? How did that moral order come about? Explain.
- 3.) Can our Christian ethics be separated from our theology? Explain why this is possible or not?
- 4.) What is the difference between ethics and law?
- 5.) Explain in your own words the concept of Divine Natural Law. How does it differ from Secular Natural Law, and is it possible for mankind to conceive of laws that are comparable to God's natural law? Explain why or why not.
- 6.) Read Genesis 1: 26-27. What is the significance of that verse with respect to our understanding the precepts of God's Natural Law?
- 7.) Read the Ten Commandments below. Why do you think Jesus answered the Scribe in the manner quoted in Mark 12: 28-31 below instead of quoting one of the ten?

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

One of the scribes ... asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' ³¹ "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12: 28-31

NOTES

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PowerPoint Slides

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UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

DEFINING THE TERM "WORLDVIEW"

The term *worldview* refers to any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion that provides *an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man's relation to God and the world.*

David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Religious Worldviews of our Day and the Search for Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1991)

TEN CATEGORIES THAT MAKE A WORLDVIEW

THEOLOGY	The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God. <i>What about God?</i>
PHILOSOPHY	The attempt to discover an explanation for the whole of existence or reality. <i>What is real?</i>
ETHICS	The study of what is right and wrong behavior. <i>What is right?</i>
LAW	The study of the basic principles of nature and human conduct that are expected to be observed. <i>Who makes the rules?</i>

DEFINITION: ETHICS

Ethics: the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; the principles of conduct governing an individual or group.

Morals: Of or relating to the principles of right or wrong behavior; expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior; conforming to a standard of right behavior.

Source: *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*

ETHICS: KEY IDEAS

- Key Idea: There must be an absolute if there is to be a moral order and real values.
- “The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary color, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in.”

C. S. Lewis

THE CONFUSION OF SECULAR HUMANISTS



“The modern age, more or less repudiating the idea of a divine lawgiver, has nevertheless tried to retain the ideas of moral right and wrong, without noticing that in casting God aside they have also abolished the meaningfulness of right and wrong as well.”

American Philosopher, Richard Taylor, author of *Ethics, Faith, and Reason*

REVELATION & OUR COMMON MORAL HERITAGE

- ❑ Christian morality is founded on the belief that an absolute moral order exists outside of, and yet somehow inscribed into, man's very being. It is a morality flowing from the nature of the Creator through the nature of created things, not a construction of the human mind. It is part of God's general revelation to man.

David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian*

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO SECULAR ETHICS

- ❑ "The so-called "new morality" is nothing but an excuse to use "morality" to do as one pleases."
 - ❖ David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian*
- ❑ "If there is no absolute beyond man's ideas, then there is no final appeal to judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgments conflict. We are left merely with conflicting opinions."
 - ❖ Francis Schaeffer, *How Then Shall We Live?*

THE INEVITABILITY OF SIN

“When a person makes up his own ethical code, he always makes up an ethical system he thinks he has kept. In the law of God, we find a law which smashes our self-righteousness, eliminates all trust in our own goodness, and convinces us that we are sinners. The law of God leaves us with our hands over our mouths and our faces in the dust. We are humbled before God and convinced that we are guilty transgressors of His law.”

Dr. James Kennedy, *Why I Believe*

SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS ON ETHICS

- ❑ God’s moral nature is absolute and unchanging. God always hates evil and loves good. The Bible is of supreme importance because it tells us the difference between the two, providing a framework on which a completely unambiguous ethic must be built. According to biblical Christianity, ethical relativism leads to destruction. (Matthew 7: 13)

David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian: Understanding and Living a Biblical Worldview*

SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS ON ETHICS

- Christian ethics is inseparable from theology for the simple reason that [it] is grounded in the character of God. Rather than believing in some ethical scheme bound to society's ever-changing whims, the Christian answers to a specific moral order revealed to man through general revelation, the special revelation of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ.

David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian: Understanding and Living a Biblical Worldview*

A SECULAR HUMANIST VIEW ON ETHICS

“The morality or immorality of any behavior, including sexual behavior, has been put in the context of ‘situation ethics.’ In this approach moral behavior may differ from situation to situation. Behavior might be moral for one person and not another or moral at one time and not another.”

Arthur E. Gravatt, quoted in William H. Genne, “Our Moral Responsibility,” *Journal of the American College Health Association*, Vol. 15 (May 1967)

DEFINITION: LAW

- ❑ Law: a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority.

Source: *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*

- ❑ A rule of conduct or procedure recognized by a community as binding or enforceable by authority

Source: Encarta Dictionary: English (North America)

THE LAW: KEY IDEA

- ❑ General and special revelation together provide enough information for people to implement a legal system that need not depend on the wisdom of sinful human beings.

NATURAL LAW: THREE PERSPECTIVES

- ❑ Divine Natural Law
- ❑ Secular Natural Law
- ❑ Historical Natural Law

DIVINE NATURAL LAW

- ❑ Divine Natural Law: the belief that law must conform to the commands that were laid down and inspired by God who governs according to principles of compassion, truth, and justice.
- ❑ We can know God's natural law through our conscience and our inherent sense of right and wrong.
- ❑ Divine Natural Law comes directly from the character of God via special revelation.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS



“Upon these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation [*the Bible*], depend all human laws.”

Sir William Blackstone, “Commentaries on the Laws of England”

MORE OF BLACKSTONE'S WISDOM

“Man, considered as a creature, must necessarily be subject to the laws of his Creator, for he is an entirely dependent being. ... And consequently as man depends absolutely upon his Maker for every thing, it is necessary that he should in all points conform to his Maker's will. This will of his Maker is called the law of nature.”

Source: Commentaries on the Laws of England

SECULAR NATURAL LAW

- ❑ Secular Natural Law replaces the divine laws of God with the physical, biological, and behavioral laws of nature as understood by human reason. This perspective elevates the capacity of the human intellect over the spiritual authority of religion.

HISTORICAL NATURAL LAW



- This view holds that law must be made to conform with the well-established – but unwritten – customs, traditions, and experiences that have evolved over the course of history.

DIVINE NATURAL LAW CONSISTS OF FIVE BASIC PRECEPTS

1. The source of all divine natural law is the character and nature of God.

Romans 1:19-20 ... because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

DIVINE NATURAL LAW CONSISTS OF FIVE BASIC PRECEPTS

2. The moral order proceeds from and reflects the character of God – His holiness, justice, truth, love, and mercy.

God's moral order is as real as His physical order.

DIVINE NATURAL LAW CONSISTS OF FIVE BASIC PRECEPTS

3. We are created in God's image and thus are significant . Our life is not an afterthought or accident.

God established human government to protect human life, rights, and dignity.

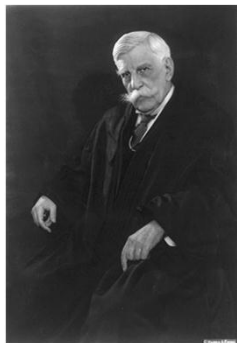
DIVINE NATURAL LAW CONSISTS OF FIVE BASIC PRECEPTS

4. When Jesus Christ took on human form, human life assumed even greater significance.

God the Creator became God the Redeemer.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

A SECULAR HUMANIST'S WORLDVIEW ON LAW



- “I see no reason for attributing to man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court - 1902 - 1932

DIVINE NATURAL LAW CONSISTS OF FIVE BASIC PRECEPTS

5. God through Jesus Christ will judge the whole human race according to His standard of good and evil.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

WHY A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IS IMPERATIVE

- "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell-- and great was its fall."

Matthew 7:24-27