

## **World View: Can we know the Truth?**

**John 8:39-47**

***October 27, 2019***

The question before us is simple: can we know the truth about God, ourselves, the bible, the promised future, and where everything is heading? What are the avenues to lead us to know this truth? A worldview seeks to answer fundamental questions about the nature of truth. Does my worldview answer the questions we have posed, namely?

Where did I come from?

Why is the world in such a mess?

Is there a solution?

What is my purpose within this solution?

Each of us has a worldview that enables us to interpret life, relationships, nature, birth, death, evil, and the future. Worldviews are important. But there are many worldviews to choose from. Our family background, our education and life experience helps shape our way of looking at life. It's possible that we have never really thought much about this question. That doesn't mean that we don't have a lens through which we view all of life. It is just there in the background of our lives. What we cannot avoid is the powerful influence of the post-modern, post-Christendom world that forms the context of our modern lives. These influences are difficult to avoid and affect even those of us within the church community. Fact is that we live in a climate of relativism in which truth about the unseen world of God, Bible and Spirit is not provable and therefore is relative.

Within a biblical worldview there are three ways the bible tells us how we know the truth about God as creator and Lord.

1. God speaks to us through the word of God in Scripture.
2. God reveals the truth about the creator through the evidence of nature.
3. And finally, God reveals the truth about ethics (difference between right and wrong) through conscience.

The Bible is a human document that comes to us from many authors and editors, over many centuries and yet through these various writers a single vision is presented. God is creator, Jesus is Lord, and the Spirit is active in the world. God has chosen to reveal the truth about God through these writings, about the human family and our sins, and about our world and our destiny. But in a final, definitive statement to the human family, God has chosen to speak the last word to us through his Son Jesus Christ. Truth ultimately is found in his person. If we want to know this truth we need to be in relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life, as John reminds us.

God also speaks eloquently through **nature**. Paul in Romans one confirms this fact: *But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse. (Rom 1:19,20)*

And yes, even the Old Testament speaks of the power of nature's speech: *The heavens are telling the glory of God...Day to day pours forth speech and night to night declares knowledge*

The universe in its immensity and complexity reveals to us the power and wisdom of God. Here in our own little Milky Way the earth is like a tiny ant in the jungle of the Amazon. There are between 200 and 400 billion stars in this cluster called the Milky Way.

So yes, even the person in the dense jungles of the world, cut off from any contact with modern life, can know something of God's power and majesty. They will be judged on that knowledge alone. We, however, with our storehouse of knowledge in the Bible, to say nothing of the Christian tradition that is open to us all, will be much more accountable.

Think about the last time nature caused you to stop and ponder the mystery of the universe. It could have been a sunset over water or mountains; it could have been while looking up into the night sky and being humbled by the immensity of God's universe; it could have been the recently discovered map of the human genome; whose

three billion letters long string demonstrates the complexity of our human creation.

Francis Collins, who led the team of the Human Genome Project, in his book, **The Language of God**, quotes Clinton surprising words uttered in the East Room of the White House the day the announcement was made. Clinton said:

*Today we are learning the language in which God created life. We are gaining ever more awe for the complexity, the beauty, and the wonder of God's most divine and sacred gift.*

Collins, who was standing next to the President at this announcement said, *It is humbling for me, and awe-inspiring, to realize that we have caught the first glimpse of our own instruction book, previously known only to God.*

Science and religion may on the surface seem to be two competing worldviews engaged in battle, but scientists like Francis Collins reminds us that faith and science can co-exist comfortably. Science, as Collins reminds us in his book, cannot answer the questions we have posed in this series: Where did I come from, what is the meaning of life, what the source of evil is, and what happens after we die. Faith addresses these questions; science uncovers the laws of the natural world. Ultimately Paul is correct, nature does reveal God's glory, majesty and mystery. This is speech we cannot ignore.

God also speaks to us through **conscience** or the **moral law** imprinted within us. The Christian faith affirms that we are made in God's image and while the image has been damaged by sin it is not destroyed. The moral law is still second nature to the human family. We can tell the difference between good and evil, regardless of our religious heritage.

Again Paul speaking of those who have no access to the Jewish Law, but still keep it: *They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within them that echoes God's yes and no, right and wrong. (Rom 2:14ff)*

In other words, this knowledge of good and evil is within each one of us. We are born with this capacity.

There is within the human species this innate capacity to reach out to the other with help; it is instinctive. Where did this come from? Paul would say that it emanates from the image of God within us. God put it there at creation. The moral law simply cannot be avoided without us feeling the pangs of guilt. This too is God's speech to us.

But, of course, we have the capacity also to ignore these voices of the bible, nature and conscience. Modern worldviews such as the secular, natural worldview has done a masterful job of this.

There is an interesting conversation between Ahmad and Jack Levy the school guidance counselor in John Updike's novel, **Terrorist**. Ahmad is committed to Islam, while Jack is a somewhat disillusioned and tired secularist. Ahmad has just offered his view of Western culture as Godless and obsessed with sex and luxury goods. Jack responds by suggesting that his imam ought to have reminded Ahmad of the benefits of living in a culture so diverse. Ahmad responds, "No...He feels that such a relativistic approach trivializes religion, implying that it doesn't much matter. You believe this, I believe that; we all get along--that's the American way."

Truth about God for so many in our society is no longer objective and universal truth. It is simply a matter of personal choice. In a culture in which everything is relative who can know what is true about God or life after death or morality. If there is no absolute truth, no absolute right or wrong, then all ethical decisions are relative, and all bets are off on finding the truth. That seems to be where we have ended up in our modern, western societies, in a dead end, a cul-de-sac, from which there is no apparent exit.

Many of us read the **Da Vinci Code** or watched the movie and ended up not accepting Dan Brown's interpretation of history. However, he succeeded in convincing lots of people that the church had hidden the truth about Jesus from us. According to Brown the church had to engage in a cover up since the actual truth was so explosive, namely that Jesus was married, and had a child by Mary Magdalene. Moreover, the great painter Da Vinci knew this secret and

incorporated this truth into this work *The Last Supper*. Mary Magdalene is in the painting and represents the much sought after Holy Grail, which turns out is not a cup, but Christ's wife and mother of his child. Mary Magdalene is the Holy Grail.

To the secular, humanist, naturalist, or whatever worldview one embraces, this was wonderful news. It fits perfectly with a worldview that denied the claims of the biblical tradition. The problem, however, is that none of what Brown alleges is historically accurate. What he says about the bible, the creeds, the councils, Jesus, and Mary Magdalene is simply untrue.

But within a society that is already living within a cloud of confusion about truth, about faith, about the Bible, about faith's relationship to science, Brown's book is like manna in the desert. Not only are we living today with confusion, but also we suffer from *truth decay*, as Rick Warren aptly describes it. Today we suffer from a loss of truth in almost every sector of society: business, politics, education, entertainment, sports, and yes, even the church. If any of us follow the U.S. politics we have seen the power of untruth in winning and keeping power. Corruption, deceit, cover-up, and theft are no longer confined to the Mafia and the underworld of crime, but are endemic to all sectors of society.

Is truth knowable? Is it concrete, objective, authoritative for all? You bet it is. Because truth is in a person and we can know him. This truth is found in relationship with Jesus and is corroborated by the evidence in the bible, nature, and conscience. But ultimate truth that sets us free is found through faith in Jesus Christ. Through the prism of our relationship with him the ethical and spiritual confusion that so imprisons people today will be clarified.

This doesn't mean there will be no more doubt. Hardly! Doubt is part of faith, not opposed to it. But faith does serve to unblock the eyes to see as they haven't before. Having ears to hear, and eyes to see is what Jesus called the wisdom of spiritual insight. This comes from the Spirit whom Jesus promised to all who believe.

Are you open to this truth? Have you stepped over the line of apathy or even hostility and said yes, I will consider the claims of Jesus? Are

you willing to spend some effort to consider the evidence? That's the least we can do. If you do I believe God will guide and reward your search, for whoever seeks God the promise is that you will find him.

**Amen**