

FOUNDATIONS
FOR CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
THE LAW OF GOD (1)



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A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Foundations for Christian Worldview: The Law of God (1)
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Welcome to *Foundations for Christian Worldview: The Law of God (1)*

We begin an extensive study of the Christian worldview, tracing its outline and development throughout the Old and New Testaments. Our starting place is where Jesus said we should start, with the writings of Moses, the Law of God.

These days many Christians have little use for the Law of God. They nod to the Ten Commandments, of course; but, beyond that, the Law has little bearing on their lives, and little relevance to the worldview that shapes their thinking and guides their daily existence.

Yet Jesus, Who is the very centerpiece of Christian worldview, insisted that Moses wrote about Him. That being the case, any study of Christian worldview which ignores or downplays the Law of God is going to be something less than what Jesus commended, and what the apostles taught and lived.

The Law of God is the acorn to the oak of divine revelation. Our study of Christian worldview will find in the Law both a foundation and cornerstone for developing a Christian worldview, a worldview that comes to fullest expression in Jesus, beginning in the five books of Moses.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The End from the Beginning

For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" John 5.46, 47

Worldview

We are today beginning an introductory study of the Christian worldview.

Before you stop reading, consider: *Everybody* has a worldview. I have a worldview. You have a worldview. All our neighbors and contemporaries have a worldview. Worldview is not a subject for elite academics or pop theologians only. It's a topic for everyone to understand, especially Christians, because everyone's worldview plays a defining role in the lives we live and the happiness we enjoy.

A worldview is just that – a way of *viewing* or *thinking about* the world and our lives in it, expressed in the way we think, desire, and live. Worldviews are defined by the way people understand the world; our beliefs and convictions about things like values, priorities, the good life, culture, and society; and the ways we conduct our relationships, roles, and responsibilities. We may not be very conscious of our worldview, so that explaining it to others would not be very effective. Or we may be quite conscious of and deeply committed to our worldview, so that we talk about it, urge others to consider it, and do our best to live it to the fullest in every aspect of our lives.

Worldview defines the patterns of our lives and guides the way we organize our time. Our worldview entails a raft of priorities and values, and these shape what we think about, desire, and do. As far as it is in our ability to do so, we want our worldview to line up with two foci: (1) what we hope to realize as the good life, and (2) how we understand the way the world actually works, since we'll never realize the good life if we're misguided about this, and therefore always struggling against the currents of reality.

So worldview seems like an important subject. In this series we will outline the broad parameters of a Christian worldview, showing how that worldview begins to take shape in the earliest parts of the Bible, and how it comes to fullest expression in Jesus Christ and the Kingdom over which He rules. And we will endeavor throughout this 7-part series (49 installments in all) to present the Christian worldview as something *greatly to be desired* and *readily within our grasp*.

Christian worldview

All worldviews share similar characteristics and features. We'll be considering some of those as we work through this study. Yet the Christian worldview is unique in that it alone seeks to reflect *God's* understanding and rule over the world. It does this by taking the Bible as God's Word and, beginning where He began, seeking to understand the world and our lives in it according to His revelation. We should expect the Christian worldview, therefore, to provide the *best explanation* of the world and how it works, as well as the *clearest guidance* for how we may know full and abundant life – the Good Life – within God's world.

We're going to take as our touchstone for this study the revelation of God through Moses, contained in the first five books of the Bible, the Law of God. We begin here because the Law of God is the acorn to the oak of divine revelation. What we learn here about Christian worldview should guide all the rest of our study of Scripture, as we pursue the lifelong calling to understand, embrace, live, and enjoy life and the world as the Word of God directs.

We don't often think of the Law of God as a starting-point for discussing Christian worldview. Or, these days, for much of anything else, either. The Law of God is largely neglected on the part of Christians today.

Indeed, respected church leaders in our day not only neglect to preach and teach the Law of God; they actively insist that the Law is no longer relevant for Christian life.

It is perhaps for this reason that many – perhaps most – Christians are not living a Christian worldview, but something less, much less, than that.

There are good reasons for beginning here, and in our run-up to this study of Christian worldview, I want to examine some of those reasons – beginning with the most important reason of all.

The focus of Christian worldview

Anyone who knows anything about Christian worldview – or about Christianity, which is just another name for Christian worldview – knows that Jesus factors large in the subject. He is the Fount of all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2.2, 3). In Him the entire cosmos coheres and holds together (Heb. 1.3). He is the very Word of God, the Logos – the *Explanation* or *Reason* – undergirding and defining everything that is, was, or ever will be (Jn. 1.1-5). Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14.6). He insisted that *all* Scripture is about *Him* (Jn. 5.39).

So any worldview claiming to be a *Christian* worldview has to have Jesus front, center, and throughout. But where do we find the information and insights we need concerning Jesus?

Obviously, by turning to the Scriptures, which are the Word of God written, and which have Jesus as their primary focus and theme (2 Tim. 3.15-17; 2 Pet. 1.19-21).

And if we're going to search the Scriptures in order to discover what they have to say about Jesus and the worldview that attaches to, orbits around, and unfolds from and in and toward Him, we should start with the writings of Moses, the Law of God.

For, as even the Lord Jesus Himself explained: "Moses...wrote about Me."

For reflection

1. What is a worldview? Are there other worldviews operating in our world today? Such as?
2. Is it a good idea to be ignorant of the worldviews that are shaping our lives? Can we hope to know full and abundant life in Christ apart from a growing understanding of the Christian worldview? Why not?
3. Can we understand Jesus as fully as we should apart from understanding the Law of God? Explain.

Next steps – Conversation: Make a copy of today's installment, or email the link to a friend. Invite your friend to go through this study of Christian worldview with you. Set a time every couple of weeks when you can get together to discuss what you're learning and pray about growing in your Christian worldview.

2 Loving Jesus

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” John 15.10

The sum and substance of Christian worldview

Jesus is the beginning, center, and end of the Christian worldview. He is its sum and substance. If, in developing a Christian worldview, we are seeking anything other than to know Jesus, love Jesus, follow Jesus, be transformed into the image of Jesus, join in Jesus’ agenda, seek Jesus’ Kingdom, bear witness to Jesus, fill the world with Jesus, and glorify the Father through Jesus Christ – if we are seeking anything other than this, we have become distracted from the true focus and purpose of Christian worldview. We may come up with something that sounds very Christian and Biblical, but if Jesus is not the driving force, thrust, goal, and message of our undertaking, then we are following a worldview of our own devising.

A Christian worldview must be erected on a Biblical foundation, one laid with all the counsel of God, and not just a few select passages agreeable to our interests (Acts 20.25-27; cf. 2 Pet. 3.15, 16). In the Scriptures, all roads lead to Jesus. And those roads begin their journey toward Him in the Law of God, the first five books of the Bible. Moses wrote about Jesus, our Lord insisted; so, we will get off on the wrong foot in our effort to achieve a Christian worldview if we neglect the Law of God in the books of Moses.

We might wonder why Jesus is so much the focus of the Bible. After all, the Bible addresses many different topics, a fact many advocates of Christian worldview are quick to point out. This, of course, is only what we would expect. In His Word, God reveals Himself and His will to *people*, and people inhabit a world of other people, creatures, places, and things in which they need to make their way and thrive. It makes sense that God, the Creator of people, and the One Who loves them supremely, should provide counsel for all manner of subjects relative to people and their interests and needs. We are not surprised that the Bible addresses a wide range of topics with which people have to do, or that it provides sound guidance in how to benefit and be fruitful in those topics.

But for all that, the defining focus of the Bible is Jesus. And the reasons why this is so are not difficult to understand.

The glory of Jesus

The glory of God, the apostle Paul reminds us, radiates from the face of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6). The apostle John encountered this glory in Revelation 1, and he was overwhelmed. The disciples Peter, James, and John saw that glory on the mount of transfiguration, and they found it both terrifying and enthralling. Jesus is the glory of God, as much of that glory, at least, as we can bear to contemplate (Heb. 1.3). God has invested His glory in Jesus, so that, as we see and are transformed into the image of Jesus (2 or. 3.12-18), we might glorify God in all we say and do (1 Cor. 10.31).

The glory of God is the reason for anything and everything, and Jesus is the key to knowing and manifesting God’s glory in the world. Jesus is God’s Son, His Word, Redeemer, Savior, Lord, and King. He is the fairest of all the sons of men (Ps. 45.2), the loveliest, most wonderful, most majestic, most glorious, and most honorable Person there ever was. He is more beautiful than the beauty of God’s temple, whether in its heavenly or earthly manifestation (cf. Pss. 47, 68, 93; Eph. 2.19-22). Jesus is destroying the work of the devil (1 Jn. 3.8); He is bringing the light of grace and truth to banish the darkness of unbelief and the lie (1 Jn. 2.8); He is the very Treasury of all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2.2, 3); the Fount of every blessing; the Beginning and End of all things; the One Who has reconciled the world to God and is making all things new (2 Cor. 5.18, 19; Rev. 21.5).

And the story of Jesus begins in Genesis and all the writings of Moses. Thus, if we would know Jesus in His glory, and discover God's purpose in and for all things, we must give careful consideration to the Law of God.

To know Him is to love Him

Simply put, Jesus is amazing. And amazing to know. And knowing Jesus begins in the Law of God.

Jesus is central to Scripture because God wants us to see Him as He is, know Him for what He has accomplished, and love Him as Savior and Lord and King (cf. Ps. 2.6-12). Indeed, eternal life, as Jesus Himself said, consists in knowing (loving) Jesus and His Father (Jn. 17.3).

Jesus appears throughout the Scriptures because God doesn't want us to miss any of His glory. He wants us to hear Jesus and love Him, so He shows us Jesus from all kinds of angles, by means of all kinds of resources, in teachings and types, sayings and symbols, acts and activities, people and places, doctrines and deeds, portraits and precepts. We are commanded to hear Jesus, to see Him, to follow Him, to love Him, and to serve Him as the fullest and finest expression of all we are, do, and have.

But loving Jesus is not just a matter of seeing, admiring, and adoring Him. Jesus says that if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14.15). Where are those commandments to be found?

Throughout Scripture, of course, but beginning in the Law of God. God wants us to love Jesus, for in Him we find the truth of life, the way to live it, and meaning and fullness of it, all in One. Jesus is the Good Life, and loving Jesus is the way into that life. No wonder Jesus said that, when people turn away from His Law, their love grows cold (Matt. 24.12).

To love Jesus is to know Him and keep His commandments. To keep His commandments is to abide in Him, and thus to grow in Him. So, as we begin this study of Christian worldview, in which Jesus will occupy center stage, we turn to the five books of Moses, the Law of God. There we will discover Jesus, that through the lens of Jesus, we may understand the world and our place in it according to the plans, pleasure, and purpose of God.

For reflection

1. Can we have a true and reliable Christian worldview without having Jesus at the center of it? Explain.
2. Christian worldview seeks Jesus, that we might know and love Him better. Twice the writer of Hebrews instructs his readers to *consider* Jesus (Heb. 3.1; 12.3). What does considering Jesus involve? Why is it important that we grow in our consideration of Jesus?
3. According to Jesus (Matt. 22.34-40), what is the relationship between the Law of God and the life of love?

Next steps – Transformation: What is one thing you could do to bring more contemplation of Jesus into your daily life? Why should you do this? Share your answers with a Christian friend.

3 Finding Our Identity in Jesus

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5.17-19

Who are you?

Our age is in the throes of an identity crisis. People are desperately trying to find out who they are and what they want to be; they are looking for some group or movement with which they can establish an agreeable identity, and they’re doing whatever it takes to maximize that identity, whether through outrageous self-expression, political activism, or group events of various kinds.

Everybody is desperately seeking an identity.

Nutritionists tell us, “You are what you eat.” Given the junk food that features large in the diets of many of us, that shouldn’t encourage us.

Clothiers and fashion moguls counter, “You are what you wear,” as if fashion could somehow make us more authentic. Or respectable. Or admired.

Automobile dealers want us to think, “You are what you drive.” Strap on one of these beauties, friend, and hit the road with smiles.

Others simply insist, “You are what you *feel*,” and what you feel is free to change as often or in as many ways as you like.

God knows we need a sound identity. He says, “You are what you love.” Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. And when we keep the commandments of Jesus, we become like Him.

God has rooted our identity as followers of Christ, and the Christian worldview which grows out of that identity, squarely and firmly in the books of Moses, the Law of God.

Jesus, worldview, and the Law

We must not separate Jesus from the Christian worldview. Christian worldview is not about changing culture or resisting social ills or fighting for Biblical morality. The devil is happy for us to speak widely and launch all kinds of initiatives in these arenas; he’ll even help us gain many admiring followers, and allow some of our efforts to “succeed.”

As long as Jesus remains in the background. The devil failed three times to dethrone Jesus in the wilderness, but that doesn’t mean he’s given up. He’s just looking for unwary dupes to carry out his scheme.

Many Christian worldview advocates today – pastors, pop theologians, bloggers, and others – are like Colonel Nicholson in the film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Like Nicholson, they’re determined to silence, and if possible, embarrass the enemy by building a “proper bridge”, setting aside the higher duty of resistance and loyalty to country, just to score points against their oppressors. The bridges of today’s worldview mavens take the form of clever commentaries on this issue or event; high-profile auguring for that judge or candidate, or outrage over some moral setback; expensive training programs that make a lot of noise but generally lead

nowhere; and rallies and road trips to support this or that law – in the process of which, there is a good bit of dressing down their opponents and looking for all the world like leaders.

Their arguments, photo ops, and staged events look solid and sound impressive to their followers. But if they have left off the larger cause of seeing Jesus, knowing Jesus, loving Jesus, and filling the world with Jesus, they may look and sound impressive, but they are merely building bridges for the enemy to use in his campaign against the throne of Christ.

We need all those bridges and more, but we need to make sure that all the bridges we build derive from, lead to, and transport Jesus to the world.

We must not separate Jesus from Christian worldview. Nor should we separate Jesus from the Law of God, or loving Jesus from obeying the Law. It's a mistake to think this way, one that is sure to short-circuit our efforts to learn and live a Christian worldview, and to establish our identity as followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. If we love Jesus, if we identify with Jesus as Christians, if we hope to become like Him and to live a true and world-changing Christian worldview, then we must fulfill the Law and the Prophets in our own lives.

Strength beyond our strength

We do not rely on our own strength in this effort to articulate and live a Christian worldview. We cannot become like Jesus merely by wanting to, or giving it our best shot. God has given us His Spirit for the express purpose of teaching us His commandments, thereby showing us His glory, and thus transforming us into the very image of Jesus His Son, and so empowering us to live the Good Life (Ezek. 36.26, 27; 2 Cor. 3.12-18; Phil. 2.12, 13; Eph. 3.20; Acts 1.8). The Spirit of God works with the Word of God, as we see in the first verses of Scripture and the Law (Gen. 1.1-3). We tap into the strength of the Spirit for Christian worldview when, beginning with the Law of God, we work to establish our identity as new creations in Jesus Christ.

We should expect that, as we grow in understanding and living the Christian worldview, our lives will look less like what we've always known and more like what we're learning to love: Jesus. And since Jesus spoke so highly of the Law of God, commending it as a means to greatness in His Kingdom, we need to make sure our attitude toward, devotion to, and daily diet includes a healthy and regular serving of the books of Moses (cf. Ps. 1).

In this initial study in our series on Christian worldview, we'll be focusing on the Law of God – like Jesus Himself did. As we do, we expect the worldview of God's Law to establish a template for all thinking about Christian worldview, and our identity within that worldview to take clearer and more consistent shape toward the likeness of Him from Whom, through Whom, and to Whom are all things, and to Whom belongs all glory forever (Rom. 11.36).

For reflection

1. Do you agree that people today are in the throes of an identity crisis? Explain. Why is this an excellent time for getting more clarity on our Christian worldview?
2. Jesus was very clear on how He regarded the Law (Matt. 5.17-29; 22.34-40). Why are we today not as clear?
3. Meditate on Psalm 1. How can you bring more "day and night" feeding on God's Law into your life? Why should you?

Next steps – Transformation: What can you do to add more reading and meditation in God's Law to your spiritual disciplines? Find one thing you will begin to do daily, then share that with a friend.

4 A Worldview of Hope

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 John 2.3-6

Different and desirable

It stands to reason that the subject of Christian worldview would be of interest primarily to Christians. Everyone has a worldview, but most people don't take the time to think through the various facets and nuances of their worldview. Christians, however, must, since we are called to the Kingdom and glory of God, that we might take every thought captive for obedience to Christ, do all our work as unto Him, make the most of all our time for His glory, and do all things as a witness to Him (1 Thess. 2.12; 2 Cor. 10.3-5; Col. 3.23; Eph. 5.15-17; Acts 1.8).

Thus, we cannot afford to be uninformed or lackadaisical about our Christian worldview. We want to see Jesus filling our world, beginning in our own souls, and flowing out with grace and truth to the people and places of our lives (Eph. 4.8-10; Jn. 7.37-39). This is why, in seeking to understand and develop our Christian worldview, we need to begin at the beginning, with the Law of God and the writings of Moses. For as Jesus said, Moses wrote about Him, and what Moses wrote about Jesus must perforce offer defining insights about Him and the life He has called us to live.

As Christians learn and live their worldview more consistently, an interesting thing happens: People around them start to notice (1 Pet. 3.15). They see things in us that strike them as different, even desirable. They see confidence and an overall positive outlook on life. Our words strike them as being carefully chosen and spoken to illuminate, edify, and encourage. They notice that we tend to be patient with others, and that an aura of peace accompanies our presence. Unlike many other people they know, we're not prone to become irritable or short with people; nothing about our conversation is merely frivolous or cynical; and overall, we seem to be truly interested in others, and in getting to know them, and always ready to serve and love them.

What people begin to see and hear in us is hope, the hope of glory (Rom. 5.1, 2), as it works its way into our souls and out in our lives. The Spirit of God is working with the Word of God, beginning in God's Law (2 Cor. 3.12-18) to form us into the image of the Son of God. And that transformation comes to expression as hope, and in a life of love in all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

To know Jesus

This is what it means to know Jesus, to have eternal life (Jn. 17.3). Eternal life is not just about going to heaven when we die. Or living in assurance of heaven here and now. If we truly have eternal life – Christ *in* us, the hope of glory (Col. 1.27) – then He begins to increase in us, while our old, sinful and self-centered ways fall away (Jn. 3.30; Eph. 4.17-24). As hope grows within us, and Jesus stretches out through us, people will notice, and some will want to know what it is that makes us different.

If this is not the case in your life, then, as the apostle Paul wrote, you may need to "Examine yourself" (2 Cor. 13.5). Are you sure you *know* Jesus, that you *love* Jesus, as He is revealed to us in God's Word? That you are *increasing* in the knowledge of Jesus, *growing* in the grace of Jesus, and *becoming more like* Jesus? The hope of the Christian grows like leaven to enrich every aspect of our lives, but this begins with our setting Jesus apart as Lord in our souls and in every aspect of our lives.

Perhaps Jesus is just Someone you *believe in*. You *believe* He lived, died, and rose again. You *believe* He has forgiven your sins. You *believe* that you *believe* in Jesus, and that you're going to heaven when you die.

But what does *believe in* mean if it doesn't lead to hope, expressed as love? And what kind of love can it be for Jesus that does not issue in obedience to His commandments (Jn. 15.10)?

The Christian worldview is about knowing Jesus, and discovering how everything in our lives and the vast cosmos points to Him, draws us to Him, honors and glorifies Him, enables us to *participate* in Him, and vindicates the work He has done for the salvation of sinners such as you and I. Those who hold a truly Christian worldview want above all else to be transformed increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ, and then to experience Jesus welling up within, overflowing from them, and filling all the roles, relationships, and responsibilities of their lives.

As they see this happening, they can know that they truly *know* Jesus, and, knowing Jesus, they will emit the fragrance of Him in love and hope into every nook and cranny of their lives.

And so, begin here

If we truly love this Jesus, if we really do *know* Him, we will keep His commandments. Jesus kept all the commandments of God, and, by so doing, He fulfilled all the righteousness we require to be acceptable to God and to dwell with Him. Jesus' righteousness alone is sufficient to give us entry to the divine presence and adoption into His eternal family. We do not keep the Law to become righteous.

Nevertheless, as Paul says (Rom. 3.31), the Law of God is firmly established for those who believe, for it is holy and righteous and good, it exposes our sin and illuminates the path Jesus walked, and it reveals Jesus to us for our contemplation and transformation (Rom. 7.12; Rom. 7.7; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

All the more reason for beginning our study of the Christian worldview in the Law of God.

If you love Jesus, you will delight to see Him as He is revealed in God's Law. And when you've seen and contemplated Him there, you will be filled with hope, and ready to live out what you're learning of Him in joyful obedience. This is Christian worldview, seeing your world according to its need for Jesus, and being a vessel of hope to bring the reality of Jesus into all your relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

Live this way and you'll know hope. And your hope will show. And gradually, you'll begin to discover that you aren't the only person interested in Christian worldview.

For reflection

1. How important is it that you be ready to "give an answer" to anyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in you? What would your answer be?
2. What is it about the Law of God that produces a life of hope in those who walk in it?
3. Why should we expect the Law of God to offer "defining insights" into Jesus and the life to which He calls us?

Next steps – Transformation: What opportunities will you have today to show Jesus to the people you meet? How can you prepare for those opportunities right now?

5 Whom the Devil Hates

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3.4, 5

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12.17

A caveat

A caveat is in order at this point: Taking up the challenge of living a Christian worldview is not for sissies.

All who are the offspring of the woman of Revelation 12 will be eager to grow in the Christian worldview. In John's vision, the woman symbolizes both Eve and Mary, and the saints of the Old Testament and those of the New. To clarify further, John explains that they are the true children of the Church who "have the testimony of Jesus Christ" and "who keep the commandments of God."

To have saving faith is to know and love Jesus, and to walk the path He walked, the path of the commandments of God (1 Jn. 2.1-6). The Law of God, which was ordained from of old, marks the path of good works every believer must walk (Eph. 2.8-10). Christian worldview begins here.

Moses reported that evil, suffering, and death came into the world when our first parents *rejected* the commandment of God and chose to follow their own best ideas. They listened to the tempting voice of the serpent, which excited their lusts, and ignored and rebelled against the commandment of God. The serpent – Satan – hates God, and he hates those whom God loves. And, since the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 12.5), the devil has resolved to "make war" with those whom God loves, those who have the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God.

This is nothing new; the devil has hated believers from the beginning, and he hates them still, and seeks to devour them by every means (1 Pet. 5.8).

Don't be surprised, therefore, as you work to improve in living the Christian worldview, to find that the serpent of old will reach deep into his bag of tricks to try to prevent you from realizing your goal. He hates you, and he will do whatever he can to keep you from entering more deeply into full and abundant life with Jesus Christ.

Trials and sufferings

The apostle Paul explained that those who know and serve Jesus must arm themselves for conflict (Eph. 6.10-20). We only enter the Kingdom of God, which is the realm within which we live our Christian worldview, through many trials and sufferings, many of which come to us as direct assaults from the devil (Acts 14.22; 1 Pet. 5.8). All who have the testimony of Jesus are the special objects of the devil's rage, and they may expect, in the process of learning to be long-suffering, to be long-bothered by the enemy of our souls.

But again, let's be clear: John identifies those who "have the testimony of Jesus" as those who also "keep the commandments of God." There is no separation between Jesus and the commandments of God; no burnt bridge between grace and Law. No growth in the *worldview* of Jesus apart from the *commandments* of Jesus. Confessing Jesus and keeping His Law go together, and identify those who are the targets of Satan's wiles.

If we profess to know Jesus, but have no grounding in the commandments of God, while we will not be

totally free from temptation or trial, we may expect that the devil will bother us but a little. Merely professing faith in Jesus is no threat to the devil's lies, for without keeping the Law of God, we manifest no hope or truth to the world, but merely a kind of feel good belief that we possess eternal bliss beyond the grave. Such faith does not challenge the devil's designs. He seeks the very throne of the Lord, to rule the world according to the lie, which insists that God is irrelevant or non-existent, and therefore His Law and Word do not matter, and His salvation, if there is such a thing, is only for the weak or naïve.

Merely having the testimony of Jesus does not challenge the existing world order, with its preference for lies, deceit, and half-truths. Merely professing faith in Jesus is not a *worldview*, but merely a subjective hope.

But testify of Jesus and *live* as He did, according to the Law of God, and the truth of God and the Christian worldview will increasingly pervade and transform all your relationships, roles, and responsibilities. The hope of glory will be evident in all your ways, and the light of truth will shine in the darkness of the devil's domain, everywhere his lies have left people groping and grasping, uncertain, confused, and without hope.

And, be assured, he will not take kindly to such incursions. The devil will never be very far from trying to work you woe.

Arm yourself with truth – all of it

You may expect to be long-bothered by the enemy of our souls if you confess Christ and keep the commandments of God. The Christian worldview is built on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ and the foundation of God's commandments. This is where the front lines of Kingdom advance encounter and overthrow the enemy of our souls.

So get ready. Temptations and trials lie ahead for all who profess faith in Jesus and keep the commandments of God. Arm yourself with all the counsel of God, beginning in His Law. Look to Jesus, seek Jesus, grow into Jesus, and live for Jesus as Jesus lived in this world. Thus, despite trials and sufferings and resistance of many kinds, you will grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, and in the Christian worldview.

It's a struggle, that's for sure. But, oh, what glory awaits those who – here and now as well as then and there – take up this cross daily and follow their exalted King.

Questions for reflection

1. How do you expect to experience the devil's opposition to your faith? Are you prepared to resist him?
2. Confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord, and keeping the commandments of God, are two sides of the coin of saving faith. Explain.
3. How should you "arm yourself" against the devil every day?

Next steps – Preparation: James (Jms. 4.7) and Peter (1 Pet. 5.9) say we should "resist" the devil, who seeks to distract and subvert our faith by temptation and trial. When either of these come against you – temptation or trial – what will you do to resist the devil and stand firm in your faith? Share your answer with a Christian friend.

6 Living toward the End

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. James 2.12

There is *therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...* Romans 8.1

Not near, perhaps, but sure
The end is near!

At the risk of sounding like a sandaled prophet carrying a home-made sign, I need to remind us: All good things must come to an end, even this life and everything about it we love. This is a fundamental and important component of the Christian worldview, rooted in the garden of Eden and the Law of God (Gen. 2.17; Lev. 22.9), and proved in every generation of humankind.

The end for every one of us, if not *near*, is at least, *sure*.

Now folks don't like to talk about dying. Humans can be very creative in the various ways they euphemize, and try to postpone, ignore, deny, or otherwise avoid the subject. All living things die, and that includes all human beings.

Then what?

To die once

Perhaps you've seen the bumper sticker which reads (and I modify here), "Life's a bummer; then you die." The writer of Hebrews tells us that people live under the fear of death (Heb. 2.15). What are they afraid of, I wonder?

Some, perhaps, of the *manner* in which they might die? They'd prefer a minimum of pain and suffering. Don't drag it out. Don't let it be violent. Just let me go in my sleep, if you will.

Others fear simply no longer existing. What will *that* be like? But I don't know why they should fear this, if no longer existing is the consequence of death. If they're no longer existing, they won't care.

But nobody wants to *not* exist. We want to live, and if we have to die, well, then, we'd like to live somehow, somewhere else, where we didn't have to fear dying again – a feature of every religion known to humankind, except the religion of secularism. Secularism, with its entrenched naturalism and materialism, has nothing good to offer in the way of hope beyond the grave. This is perhaps the one point of Biblical religion that secularists will affirm: "...it is appointed for men to die once..." (Heb. 9.27).

But this is the problem most folks face: They *know* they aren't meant for death. They're meant for *life*. Life is what human beings are all about. Death is the enemy. Death is the Grim Reaper, not simply the Inevitable Consequence. People don't like to think about death, and I suspect that one reason is the haunting fear that, after death, existence *might continue* in some form.

And in that after-death-existence, "living" might not be, well, worth it?

After this the judgment

Could it even be that judgment awaits us?

This is, of course, what the Christian worldview teaches. A day of judgment is coming for all, when all shall come under the searchlight of the Law of God and render an accounting of their lives. We do no one a favor either by refusing to acknowledge this, or to make it known to the people around. We're all going to die, and then we're all going to appear before the judgment seat of God.

James says that, knowing this to be the case (as those who hold the Christian worldview certainly do know), we should live each day toward the end, preparing for that great assize by walking in obedience to the Law of God, not in order to *gain* salvation, but to *show the salvation of God to the world* through good works of love, and to prove our claim of being saved by not presenting ourselves to Jesus as *lawless* but *lawful* (Eph. 2.8-10; Matt. 7.21-23).

The true believer “suits up” for each day by renewing his testimony of Jesus and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness, walking in the Law of liberty and love (Rom. 14.13, 14; 1 Jn. 2.1-6).

Believers do not fear what follows death, for they know that Jesus Christ has already stood in their place to receive the *condemnation* which the Law declares against all those who transgress the Law of God. And that would be all of us.

Whew! Half-way there to the presence of God: The judgment *against* us is satisfied. The wicked serpent bruised the heel of Jesus on the cross, while Jesus crushed His head by overcoming death and the grave, and by rising to glory and eternal reign (Gen. 3.15).

But Jesus does not leave us merely half-way into the presence of God. He *satisfied* the wrath of God against our sins, and this came at the end of a life of *perfectly obeying* the Law of God in every detail, which, by doing so, accomplished all the righteousness we will ever need to come fully into the presence of the eternal God of glory. As Paul summarized this twofold work of Jesus, “[God] made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5.21).

Death may still hold a certain dread for believers. That’s only natural. And the loss of a loved one through death is, for believers, a time of grief and sorrow. But even that dread and grieving will one day be no more, when death is swallowed up in eternal life for all who hold the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God.

So for now, we live toward the end, filling our lives with the holiness, righteousness, and goodness of God and His Law, following the path that Jesus walked in good works of rejoicing and love.

If we’re to live this way, with a view to the coming judgment of God, then we must anchor our Christian worldview in the Law of God, so that our testimony of Jesus will be borne out in our daily lives in the form of love for God and our neighbors.

That way, when we arrive at the end of life, we’ll be “well-suited” to endure the judgment that is sure to come.

Questions for reflection

1. Why is it important to include the *bad* news of judgment whenever we share the *Good* News of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus Christ?
2. Why does it only make sense to bring our lives into line with the teaching of God’s Law?
3. Believers do not fear the judgment of God, but does this mean they can live any old way they want? Explain.

Foundations for Christian Worldview: The Law of God (1)

Next steps – Preparation: Outline what you would say about the judgment to come when sharing the Gospel. Share your outline with a Christian friend.

7 The Good Life

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Romans 7.12

The goal of worldview

Everyone is seeking some version of the good life. It would be accurate to say that every worldview, whether understood clearly or barely, explains, justifies, and unfolds toward some vision of the good life.

Few – very few – are they who devote themselves to seeking misery, discomfort, pain, sorrow, disappointment, and suffering as their highest aspirations in life. People are not wired that way; we’re wired to want a *good* life, and our greatest challenge is to define that good life, and to understand what is needed to achieve it, so that we can seek it day by day.

And this is the task of worldview. Whether that worldview is secular, Muslim, Marxist, animist, or Christian, its aim is to define, pursue, and realize, as fully as possible, the idea of the good life that worldview propounds.

The clearer our understanding of the good life, the sharper and more well-defined will be the parameters of our worldview, and the more focused and fruitful will be our pursuit of that which we most desire.

Varieties of good

As is easily seen, ideas of the good life abound, and they do not always agree. For some, the good life is defined in materialistic terms, a life of getting and spending and indulging our sensual and material interests. When material abundance is what we seek, we will organize the time of our lives, first, to obtain material abundance and, second, to indulge it. Our lives alternate between seasons of work and times of leisure. And the sooner we can be through with the former, the more time we will have for the latter. Earning, spending, getting, and indulging are the watchwords of a materialistic worldview. Economics defines the moral code of such a worldview, and success is defined in terms of satiation.

Other worldviews revolve around acquiring and increasing power over others. People for whom power is the greatest good may or may not seek it for material ends. They may simply find satisfaction in commanding the attention, adulation, and compliance of as many people as possible. They want to be in charge, and they want everyone around them to acknowledge and accept their power. Marxist revolutionaries have gladly suffered the deprivations of the jungle for the sake of realizing power.

Still other worldviews are more other-worldly. The good life is not to be achieved in this life, except insofar as what we do in this life promises to secure for us what we hope for most in the life to come. Such a worldview can be a source of violence and danger when the ends of eternal bliss justify whatever we have to do to achieve that state.

As is clear, not all ideas of the good life are equally valid. One man’s good may be another man’s misery. If everything or anything can be described as good, then nothing is good, and it’s every man for himself, as in the days of the judges of ancient Israel.

So we need to make sure that the good we seek is *truly* good and worthy of our devotion and energy.

The God life

In the Christian worldview, the “good life” is the “God life” – life “under the heavens,” rather than “under the sun” (to recall Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes). The good life is the holy and just life, the life lived

and taught by the best Man Who ever lived, our Lord Jesus Christ. The good life is knowing and serving Him Who alone is good, and by Whose grace our lives have been hidden in God (Col. 3.1-3).

Jesus is the *Way* to real life. He is the *Truth* about the good life. Jesus *is* the Good Life! To know Jesus is to know God and eternal life (Jn. 17.3). To follow Jesus is to be transformed into His holy and righteous and good image (2 Cor. 3.12-18). To serve Jesus is to bring the goodness of God to light in the land of the living, in all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities (Ps. 27.13), to manifest the glory of God in good works in every area of life.

The leading edge of Christian witness in the early days of the Kingdom was the proclamation of Jesus as One Who *did* good and taught truth (cf. Acts 10.34-42). The astonishing example of the first Christians was their ability to set differences aside and live together in love, doing good and sharing with one another (Acts 6.1-7). The very end of our redemption as Christians is that we might *know* what is good (Jn. 13.17), *do* what is good (Tit. 2.11-14), *encourage* one another unto the good life (Heb. 10.24), and prepare such a repertoire and dossier of good works that, when we finally stand before our eternal Lord and Judge, we will have no fear of judgment, but only confidence in Him of being received into His eternal presence and blessedness.

Jesus is holy and just, and Jesus is good. He came to fulfill the Word of God, beginning in His Law, and to do those good works of righteousness that His followers should emulate, that they might make Him and His glory known throughout the world.

In the Christian worldview, the good life is the God life, life safely secured in the eternal love and strength of God by the gracious work of our good Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We want the good life Jesus has for us – life in His Kingdom, here and now and then and there – the Christian worldview. But we cannot possess what is good without also resolving to pursue what is holy and just.

And whatever is holy and just and good is to be found in Jesus, as witnessed to in Scripture, beginning in the Law of God.

So if we want to know the good life, which the Christian worldview offers, we cannot know it apart from Jesus, and we cannot understand Jesus apart from the Law of God.

And this is why our study of the Christian worldview *must* begin with Moses and God's Law.

Questions for reflection

1. Where do people come up with their ideas about the good life? Why can't anybody's and everybody's idea about the good life be good?
2. Jesus was good. Everyone will acknowledge that. But what made Him good? What standard of goodness did He observe? Why should His followers care about this?
3. Meditate on Romans 7.7 and 7.12. The Law reveals sin, and the Law outlines the path of holiness, righteousness, and goodness. Why do we need to make sure our Christian worldview is grounded in the Law of God?

Next steps – Preparation: What are you doing to bring more daily meditation in God's Law (Ps. 1) into your walk with and work for the Lord? Share with a Christian friend your plan for this important aspect of Christian worldview living.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What is a worldview, and why do worldviews matter?
2. Who has a worldview? Where do worldviews come from? Are all worldviews equally valid? Explain.
3. Why must a Christian worldview be grounded in the Scriptures? And why, since this is the case, do we need to anchor our Christian worldview in the Law of God?
4. How did Jesus explain the role of the Law of God in the life of faith? Does the Law of God serve this role in your life? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've gained from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.