

FOUNDATIONS
FOR CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
THE LAW OF GOD (3):
SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS



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A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Foundations for Christian Worldview: The Law of God (3): Spiritual and Religious
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Welcome to *Foundations for Christian Worldview:
The Law of God (3): Spiritual and Religious*

The Christian worldview is very different from other worldviews competing for followers today.

Then again, in many ways, the Christian worldview is quite similar to other worldviews. All worldviews are religious and require their adherents to live by faith, hoping to achieve some measure of the good life, as they define it.

But the Christian worldview comes from beyond this world, from God, by grace, and leads us into the good and true life as God defines it – a life of redemption and joy and glory.

All this is clear from the very beginning of the Christian worldview, which comes to us in the Law of God.

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 Live Long and Prosper

Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, and he said to them: “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.” Deuteronomy 32:45-47

The Law of life

The Law of God is the cornerstone of Biblical revelation. All subsequent revelation is built upon it, and it sets the direction for the narrative that unfolds throughout all Scripture. The Law establishes the tone and pace of Scripture, introduces the primary players in the narrative of redemption, and provides the major themes for understanding all the rest of Scripture. The teaching of the Law is interpreted, practiced, elaborated, fulfilled, and enlarged throughout all subsequent revelation, and, apart from certain religious practices, it is never set aside.

In a very real sense, the Law of God is the acorn to the oak of divine revelation. And the worldview contained in the Law is likewise the footprint and template for all Biblical and Christian thinking about worldview and life. Neglect or ignore the Law, and your Christian worldview will lack the focus, scope, standards, and power God intends.

The Law of God thus contains, in a large kernel, all the teaching of Scripture, including everything that goes into making and living a Christian worldview. A worldview is a way of understanding all of life, a mind map, if you will, for discerning the best way to live in one’s particular place and time.

But it is also a road map for making progress in life toward our goal and calling to know, enjoy, love, serve, and glorify God within the framework of His Kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12).

The Christian worldview is a blueprint for life, eternal life in relationship to God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, in the power of God’s Holy Spirit, and according to His Word, for every area of life. And the life God intends for us, He begins to explain in the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses – the Law of God.

And it is here that we must begin our exploration of the vision, disciplines, and outcomes that constitute a true and vibrant Christian worldview.

Answers to questions

Worldviews answer questions, such as: Who am I? What kind of being am I? Why am I here? What kind of world is this? How are we supposed to live? Can I be happy, and if so, how? What should I be doing? Where is everything heading? What’s the meaning of it all? And so forth. People don’t just ask these questions once, but over and over, in different situations, with different ends in view, and in order to keep ourselves on track in the world.

Thus, the clearer our worldview, and the more our worldview reflects what is true and good, the more we should expect to know full and abundant life.

A sound worldview provides reliable – though not always complete – answers to all our questions, like the soundings a submarine radar officer takes continuously, to make sure his submerged vessel is proceeding on course. We are submerged in a world of incredible mystery, noise, motion, and flux. Without a worldview to guide us, we could end up imploded on the sea bed of our times.

Everyone has a worldview – even God. And God began to make known His view of life and how to get the most out of it in the five books of Moses which we call the Law of God. The stories, commandments, precepts, statutes, and rules which take up the bulk of Genesis through Deuteronomy contain God’s worldview in a nutshell; and the worldview which we may discover there marks out the shape and content of the Christian worldview as a whole. It affords answers to the most pressing of human questions, points the way through the murky waters of life, and allows us to maintain continuous contact with Him Who guides us each step of the way.

Live long and prosper

It is the hope of every human being to “live long and prosper,” as Spock never ceases to remind us. The Law of God begins the narrative and illuminates the footpath we must travel if we would know life as God intends it. The Law of God is not a “futile” thing (Deut. 32.47), as many Christians today seem to think. Rather, it is the Fount of life, the Manger of Christ, and the Chrysalis of true and eternal life.

Rather than consider the Law of God merely as a body of law, therefore, it is important that we understand it as conveying a worldview. The Law of God is not just stories, statutes, and legal codes; it outlines and guides all who submit to it into an understanding of and approach to life which is filled with the blessings of God for every aspect of human life and interest. It offers us a true first *vision* of the Christian worldview; maps out the *disciplines* essential for achieving that vision; and describes the *outcomes* we should be seeking as the image-bearers of God, heirs of His covenant, disciples of His Son, and citizens and ambassadors of His Kingdom.

The light that begins to shine in the Law of God will lead us faithfully into the glorious galleries, tight turns, fresh fields, and soaring prospects of the Christian worldview as revealed in all of Scripture, and all of creation as well.

In this present study, therefore, we want to consider the worldview of God’s Law – its form and content, and how we may engage that worldview in a way that will allow us to “live long and prosper” in our place and time, rejoicing and being at peace in the blessings of God for ourselves and our neighbors.

We begin by considering six facets of the particular *kind* of worldview which we find revealed in the Law of God.

For reflection

1. What is eternal life? Since eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ, can we know full and abundant eternal life if we choose to ignore or minimize anything God has to say to us? Explain.

2. What does it mean to say that the Law of God is the “acorn to the oak” of Scripture?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents “Hardly at All” and 10 represents “More than Sufficient”, how would you assess your familiarity with the Law of God? Why did you choose the number you did?

Next steps – Transformation: Meditate on Psalm 1. What would “day and night” meditation in God’s Law look like for you? Set up a plan for daily, continuous reading through the five books of Moses. Be realistic, and begin your plan today.

2 From Beyond This World

And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." Exodus 3.2, 3

Worldview in a bush

In the incident of the burning bush, Moses glimpsed a worldview unlike any other.

Here was a familiar physical reality, a common bush. Bushes were everywhere in Midian, and few people thought of them in any way other than as a source of a little shade on a hot afternoon. Moses had never seen a bush like this. This bush had been invaded and overtaken by a mystery – fire, burning from within its midst. But, rather than be consumed by that mystery, the bush was wondrously illuminated and seemed to be alive in a strange and inviting way.

The fire Moses observed was no ordinary fire. In fact, it was not a physical fire at all, but the fire that accompanies the living God (Ps. 18.8-12) – a spiritual fire that illuminates, attracts, and vivifies, without consuming or destroying that which it draws unto itself. The fire was the very glory of God, signaling His presence, and summoning His chosen vessel.

The glory which illuminated, but did not consume, that bush indicated the presence of the Word of God, the “Messenger” (*Angel*) from God, Who had come to summon Moses to a reality and calling greater than he had ever known.

The worldview which begins to emerge in the Law of God is like that burning bush. It comes to us in a familiar physical form – words on the pages of a book. But these words are living and active (Heb. 4.12). They are fraught with glory and transforming power (2 Cor. 3.12-18). These words issue from, are sustained by, and carry the purifying fire of God, which is His Spirit (Ex. 31.18; cf. Jn. 6.63; Lk. 11.20/Matt. 12.28). And they convey the very Word and presence of God Himself, creating a space of holiness into which God draws all whom He is calling unto Himself by grace through faith.

The worldview revealed in the Word of God, beginning in His Law, illuminates life and its meaning, attracts all to whom it is revealed, and brings new life of a wholly different order – *spiritual* life, life *from above*, a life of *glory*, and life *unquenchable* and *eternal*.

A spiritual worldview

The secular worldview, which is, to some extent, the dominant life paradigm for most people today, is a “this-world” worldview. That is, it unfolds around whatever we can see, hear, feel, taste, or touch. It is *material* in its focus and aspirations. And this makes it a *closed* and *confining* worldview. Advocates of a secular worldview simply dismiss the possibility of anything other than material realities, and thus allow no place for God or spirits or souls.

The worldview revealed in the Law of God, however, makes it clear from the beginning that we inhabit a world that is *more* than material, a world that includes such spiritual realities as God, His Word, His Spirit, other spiritual beings, and something in human beings – such as Moses – that can connect with that dimension. Those realities have been present from the beginning of this material world (Gen. 1.1), and they pervade and sustain and define this world, that the glory of God may be known in it.

To understand and enter the worldview revealed in God’s Law, we must approach it spiritually, in an attitude

of fear, wonder, submission, and anticipation. We must receive it as coming to us from beyond this world, from the very presence of God. We will need to listen to the Word of God to gain the message God has for us. Some things will seem strange to us, and not easy to understand. The Word that burned from that bush will speak to us of how the illuminating and purifying fire of God can guide and empower us for full and abundant life. We will be tempted to doubt and draw back, or to prefer our own way of thinking about matters; but we must remember Moses, and, determined to know the fire of God, always seek to draw nearer to Him and His Word, so that His warmth and light can transform us as it did him.

The Christian worldview is a *spiritual* worldview, and as such, it embraces mysteries and unseen things, and it insists, according to the bush and the Book, that the entire world is infused with realities we cannot see, but that, by obeying like Moses, we can truly know, and thus be gloriously illuminated.

A religious worldview

The Law of God begins the revelation of the heart and mind of God, as it outlines His wisdom for how human beings may know full and abundant life.

The Law of God is written on the souls of human beings when they are conceived and born into the world (Rom. 2.14, 15). It is written again when the Spirit begets us into the Kingdom of God by grace through faith (Ezek. 36.26, 27). By the works of the Law, written on our hearts, together with the revelation of God throughout creation (Rom. 1.18-20), we know that the fire of God burns in and all around us. By His Law He commands us to prepare for holiness, and to seek it diligently (Ex. 3.5; Lev. 11.44; 2 Cor. 7.1).

The Word of God in His Law comes to bind us to the Lord for holiness (Rom. 7.12), to unite our material and spiritual being in His all-transforming fire, that we might be refined, renewed, and sent out to light the world with His glory. The worldview of God's Law is thus a *religious* worldview, which can only be fully entered and enjoyed through a growing relationship with the God of the bush.

If we would enter this worldview, therefore, we must learn to see within the written Law, the heart, mind, and priorities of God, and the larger world of spiritual truth to which He has called us. The Law will only entangle and snare us, like the branches of a bush, unless we set our souls to submit to the Spirit of God and His good and perfect will for us in what is written there (cf. Rom. 8.5-9).

Like Moses, we must remove the sandals of our worldly walk and approach the Lord open and vulnerable, on bare feet, as it were, fearful of His presence, but confident in His calling and grace, that we will not be consumed by what we encounter in God's Law, but will instead be illuminated, vivified, and empowered. Like a moth circling a candle, we are drawn to the Light, in full confidence that we can enter it and not be destroyed, but be made wholly and entirely new – and everything in our world as well.

For reflection

1. Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." What did he mean? How does this make the world like the burning bush?

2. How are the Scriptures like the burning bush? Why were the Scriptures given to us?

3. Living a Christian worldview requires a mind of faith and a heart of obedience. Explain.

Next steps – Transformation: Do you read your Bible to see the glow of God's glory in it? Do you read it to see Jesus in every passage? How might you begin to be more consistent in reading your Bible this way?

3 Rooted in Grace

So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them. Exodus 2.24, 25

A covenant with God

Central to the worldview that begins to emerge in the books of Moses is the idea of a covenant. While the term does not appear until God's calling of Noah, His covenant is present from the beginning. His covenant defines the relationship of favor, obligation, and blessing which God enters with the world, and in particular, with a people of His choosing. It entails their having the great privilege of knowing Him and of being subject to Him for a life of righteousness, peace, and joy.

It is important to understand that, from the very beginning of human existence and God's covenant, the relationship that covenant circumscribes is entirely dependent on the grace of God. Whatever obligations God appoints to people, they are carried out in response to His grace and, in a very real sense, by that grace, according to His Word.

As God's covenant unfolds in the early pages of the Law of God, it takes more shape, including the offering of great and precious promises (Gen. 12.1-3), of blessing everlasting (Gen. 17.6, 7), and of a King and Kingdom to bring grace to all the nations of the world (Gen. 49.8-11). All this would come from the hand of God through Israel, the people of His choosing, and it would come gradually, in stages.

The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt when God called Moses to lead them into His redemption and Law. They had no relationship with the Pharaoh of Egypt except to serve his whims and obey his commands. They knew no benefit from his oversight of their labors, and they lived in fear and misery and uncertainty all their many days, "groaning" in all their travails without relief. They hardly seem like a people through whom God would fulfill the great and precious promises of His covenant.

But it is here that we see the wonder of *grace* as the driving force and operative power of God's covenant.

All of grace

Our text says that God "remembered" His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A better way to translate "remembered" would be "gave attention to" or even "was attending to" His covenant. During all those many years of their captivity in Egypt, God had been watching over and caring for His people, waiting for the time when He might show the mighty power of His grace to deliver them unto Himself. Israel groaned and suffered for 400 years, as God Himself had foretold (cf. Gen. 15.13). Now the time had been fulfilled and God would act, as He had promised (Gen. 15.14), and bring His covenant to a higher state of fulfillment for His people.

Many of the people to whom Moses came would have known that the 400 years were up, and that God would now deliver them. They had cried to Him for deliverance, trusting in the faithfulness of His Word and calling on His grace. And now the time had come.

What would compel Moses to leave the comforts of home and family to return to a place where he was a wanted man? Grace. What would break the stubborn heart of Pharaoh so that he would let go his grip on God's chosen people? Grace. What would dispose the people of Israel to leave their long-time homes –

miserable though they were – and plunge into the desert behind a man they hardly knew? Grace. What would open the sea and make a dry path for the people to cross safely? Grace.

God's covenant with His people is all of grace. It drives how he relates to the whole world – all creation, all nations and people, and, in particular, the people He redeems for His own glory. His covenant is entirely of grace; that is, it comes as His design, at His initiative, freely and not as a result of merit, and it is extended to those people whom He has chosen according to His love, and not because of their worthiness. By His covenant God binds Himself to His people for their redemption and blessing, and through them, He makes Himself and His blessings known to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12.1-3).

As the Law of God is the acorn to the oak of Scripture, God's gracious covenant is the acorn to the oak of the Scriptural worldview. Whatever of that worldview we seek to explore or experience, we must do so within the framework and according to the parameters and promises of God's covenant.

Covenant, Law, and life

God's covenant with His people is not static and parochial. It expands and develops throughout the Scriptures, updated like a computer operating system so as to fit the needs and conditions of the people of God. As it develops, God's covenant does not set aside the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3; cf. Rom. 4.13-17; 2 Pet. 1.4); rather, it maps out the manner in which those who have been *redeemed* by promise may now *enjoy the blessings* of promise through faith and obedience to God, beginning with His Law.

Abram entered God's covenant through the bloody path of slain animals, when God walked on his behalf to take all the obligations of the covenant upon Himself (Gen. 15.12-21). Israel entered the covenant through the blood of the Passover, marked on the doorposts and lintels of their homes (Ex. 12). We cannot gain the benefits of God's Law and the worldview it begins to unfold except by entering His covenant through the bloody path provided in the Body of God's own Son (Ps. 50.3-5; Jn. 14.6).

As Abraham embraced God's covenant and pursued His promises by obeying the Lord, moving to the land of Canaan, fathering a son, and circumcising him; and as Moses submitted to God's covenant and took up his calling as Israel's redeemer; so Israel, liberated from Pharaoh's tyranny, followed God's redeemer through the sea, into the desert, and to the mountain of God, to receive His Law.

In the same way, we may know the blessings of God, and enter the gracious worldview He extends to us from beyond this world, by receiving His Son, embracing His promised redemption, and laying hold, through obedience to His Law and all His Word, of the full and abundant life He has provided for us in Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. What is a covenant? Why is a covenant so central to our relationship with God?
2. Grace is both a divine disposition and an active power. Explain.
3. Meditate on Genesis 12.1-3. How do you see in these verses the beginning *vision*, *disciplines*, and *outcomes* of the Biblical worldview?

Next steps – Preparation: Make a list of all the disciplines you consciously engage in each day. Are these sufficient to help you make progress in the Kingdom of God?

4 Unto Redemption

And God spoke all these words, saying:

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20.1, 2

Redemption and Law

Many believers today are chary about embracing the Law of God, because they believe that by doing so, they are substituting for salvation by grace through faith a kind of salvation by works. They know we are not saved by our works, and so any faith that requires us to take up the works of the Law is a works-faith rather than a grace-faith, and we must not fall into that Pharisaical snare.

So, setting aside the Law of God, they adopt a faith that prescribes vague and changeable ideas of love as its primary expression, without much regard for the comprehensive outlines and examples of love for God and neighbor provided in the Law of God. Thus doing, they embrace a worldview built on a foundation of shifting sands – definitions of love that tend to change with the moral winds of the day.

It is significant, I think, that God, after He had graciously delivered His people from Egypt, when He assembled them to renew His covenant at Mt. Sinai, did not simply say to them, “Now I have saved you. Do your best to love.” God understands the blinding power of sin, and He knows that the law of sin, which remains even in those who have been redeemed and saved (Rom. 7.21), powerfully tends toward definitions of love that are primarily self-interested and without risk, and are therefore misguided.

Having redeemed and saved His people, God brought them to Mt. Sinai, showed them His glory, and then gave them His Law. He did not give them the Law so that they might be saved. He gave them the Law so that, *being* saved, they might live to the full, expansive parameters of love for Him and their neighbors, guided by His holy and righteous and good Law (Rom. 7.12).

The Law of God comes *after* we are saved, so that *being* saved, we might live in the glorious liberty and Christlike love of the redeemed of the Lord. Being redeemed by grace through faith in Jesus Christ does not nullify the Law; rather, it establishes the Law as the basis for our lives in the world (Rom. 3.31).

Not for redemption, but unto it

The Biblical worldview contained in the Law of God is a *redemptive* worldview. That is, it sets us free from our natural tendency to sinful self-love, and reveals the way to full and abundant life in a covenantal relationship with the living God. The Christian worldview brings the liberty and renewal of redemption to every area of life, all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities. And it does so on the established foundation of God’s Law.

The Law of God does not *accomplish* redemption, and people do not *attain* redemption through obedience to the commandments, statutes, precepts, and rules of God’s Law. God alone is our Redeemer, and the redemption He provides comes to His people as a work of grace, based on His covenant, and founded on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the Law of God is *unto* redemption in that those who have come to know the saving deliverance of God may now expect, through obedience to God’s Law, to realize with ever-increasing fullness and power, the *benefits* of that redemption by practicing love for God and neighbor in obedience to the Law.

It is thus natural and indispensable to Christian worldview living, that we begin our consideration of that

worldview in God's first words to His redeemed people, His Law.

A plan for good and blessing

The redemption God's people experienced from the tyranny of Pharaoh was merely the beginning of God's plan for them, a plan for good, and not for evil, to give them a future and a hope (Jer. 29.11). God intended His people to know blessings in every aspect of their lives (cf. Deut. 28.1-14), and He determined to leave nothing to chance or their sin-tainted imaginations when it came to figuring out how to obtain the blessings He had prepared for them.

Thus the Law of God was given to bring life full and abundant to a people who had been redeemed by the gracious and powerful hand of the God of the covenant (Lev. 18.1-5). The Law does not accomplish redemption, but the Law enables the people of God to *enjoy* and *increase in* the redemption God has graciously provided.

It was by spiritual power that Pharaoh was overcome, the Red Sea parted, and the Law of God given to His people. It was on the basis of His covenant and the promises made to Abraham that Israel – now no longer a tribal group but a considerable nation – was shown the way to greater fullness through the elaboration of God's covenant at Mt. Sinai (Exodus, Leviticus) and on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy).

The redeemed of the Lord cannot know the full value of this great gift apart from seeking the Lord and obeying His Spirit according to His Word, beginning with the Law of God. The Law of God outlines the broad parameters of covenant blessing which God intends for His people as they approach Him in fear and wonder, and go forth from His presence in faith and obedience. When we say that the Law is the starting-point for Christian worldview, we are saying to Christians, who are called to take every thought captive for obedience to Christ and the glory of God (2 Cor. 10.3-5; 1 Cor. 10.31), that as God's redeemed people, we must begin our journey with Him where He did, by receiving His Law in humble faith and obedience.

The Law comes to us from the unseen realm of eternal glory and truth, and calls us to a *religious* life – a life of being bound back (Latin: *religare*) to the God Who made us, loves us, and knows what we need – a life of love for God and neighbor, bounded not by our own finite and silly imaginations, but by the glorious and holy Law of God.

For reflection

1. Meditate on Matthew 22.34-40. Why should we look to the Law of God to teach us how to love?
2. How does the Law help us to *increase* in the redemption we have in Jesus Christ?
3. The Christian worldview is a *spiritual* and *religious* worldview, grounded in God's Word, beginning with His Law. How do you experience this worldview in your own walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps – Transformation: Jesus is the full embodiment of the Law of God, fully and perfectly obeyed. What place should contemplating Jesus have in helping us to understand and abide by the Law of God? Talk with a Christian friend about this question.

5 For Life

“You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 18.4, 5

The good life

Worldviews emerge to define, justify, and guide us in pursuing the good life. We want a full and happy life, a life as free from trouble and worry as possible, one that will allow us to enjoy the people and things that bring us delight.

As we have mentioned, not everyone sees the good life in the same way. That will always be the case, and it is a chief reason why conflicts of worldviews erupt on the world stage. Our own country is even now in the throes of a conflict of worldviews, between those who define the good life in what are typically referred to as *progressive* terms, and those who tend to be more *conservative* in their aspirations. Both of these worldviews are *secular* worldviews; that is, advocates believe they can achieve the good life without meaningful resort, except as convenient, to spiritual or religious matters. While those professing faith in Jesus Christ can be found in each of these camps, in neither of them do believers wield much serious influence. We are, for the leaders of each of these worldviews, puppets and pawns to bring on the stage when it is convenient for their larger purposes. But to neither of these efforts do we contribute significant input toward a life that is truly good and truly glorifying to God.

And this highlights the importance of Christians being clear about the worldview God calls us to pursue in His Word. Because the Christian worldview comes to us from God, we should expect it to offer the greatest hope and maximum possibilities for knowing what is *good* and for enjoying *life* as God intends. We must be clear, to ourselves and the people around us, that the Christian worldview is not a go-along-to-get-along voice among the dominant worldviews of the day. Nor do we seek to bully or restrain or dominate the free choices of people; rather, the Christian worldview offers a unique understanding of life as spiritual and religious, a redeemed life, rooted in grace, that redounds in all aspects to the goodness of human beings and the world, and to the glory of God above that.

If we fail to grasp and make this point, we will not achieve the worldview of Scripture, nor will we persuade many to embrace and enter that promise of the *good life*.

Not merely spiritual

We have said that the Biblical worldview, which is revealed as a cornerstone of divine revelation in the Law of God, is a *spiritual* worldview. It comes to us from beyond this world, from God Himself. But this should not be understood to mean that this worldview applies only to “spiritual” matters. The Biblical worldview is not a narrow, “religious” understanding of human life. It does not offer a “private” or merely “personal” framework for coping with the demands of a secular age. The Christian worldview speaks to all of life and counsels the redeemed and covenant people of God concerning how they may know fullness of life, peace, and joy in the Lord.

We see this from the very beginning of the Christian worldview, as that worldview comes to expression in the Law of God. The Law of God – God’s gracious gift to the world through His redeemed people – speaks to every aspect of life, outlining and prescribing that which God defines as good and for His glory.

The Law addresses *the inner concerns* of the human life – heart, mind, and conscience. It teaches us how to discipline our souls so that all our words and deeds may be unto justice and love.

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The Law guides us in how *to conduct relationships* of truth and love, beginning in the home, working out from there to our neighbors, and addressing all the various relational demands of living in society with others.

The Law speaks of matters of *life in community* – to justice, culture, government, economics, and religious life. It guides us in the use of our personal gifts, abilities, and resources. It counsels us concerning how to show the blessings of God to those outside the pale of God’s covenant and redemption.

The Law even outlines our responsibilities toward *the created order*, how we must use and care for the rich resources of the creation all around us.

And the Law of God insists that the wisdom and goodness it prescribes for all these areas of life can only be fully appropriated in a *religious* life of fellowship with and love for God. Believers are being faithful to the worldview that begins to emerge in the Law of God as they study and practice that worldview *spiritually* and *religiously*, and not merely as a prop for some preferred secular and political agenda.

Kingdom greatness

Jesus taught that they will be great *in the Kingdom of God* who learn, obey, and teach the Law of God (Matt. 5.17-19). This should be our objective. The Christian worldview offers a vision of *God’s Kingdom*, coming on earth as it is in heaven, not merely of a secular agenda shaped and influenced by a few God-minded people. The worldview that begins to surface in the Law of God shows us how to *discipline ourselves* so the we bring every thought and every moment captive for obedience to King Jesus. And the Law of God emphasizes that only *love for God and our neighbors* provides the standard of Kingdom progress – not judges in courts, elected officials in office, or laws designed to protect religious freedoms or curtail unsavory moral conduct.

By learning the Law of God we may expect to gain the wisdom and heart of God for all of life. As the Law, like the fire in Moses’ bush, burns from without out souls with the very presence of God, we, through obedience to God’s Law, bring the blessings of His covenant to every person, situation, role, and responsibility of our own lives. If we are faithful and diligent at seeking to *achieve* our worldview, rather than to lend it to some merely political or cultural agenda, we will find that the unbelieving peoples around us will be influenced for a truly *good life* by the wisdom, beauty, goodness, and truth they see in and hear from us (cf. Deut. 4.5-8; Mic. 4.1-8; Ps. 81.15).

God knows how to unpack the blessings of His redemption to His people and the world, so that we know what is *truly good* and are thus able to enjoy *life* as God intends. And He has determined that this great work should begin in knowledge of and obedience to His Law.

Questions for reflection

1. How would you describe the conflict of worldviews that is raging in this country?
2. What does it mean to “seek first” the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6.33)? Can we seek the Kingdom apart from knowing the Law of the King? Why not?
3. Summarize the Christian understanding of the *good life*.

Next steps – Conversation: Talk with a Christian friend about the conflict of worldviews raging in our country. What should be the Christian’s role in this situation?

6 Religious – Like All Worldviews

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD ...” Deuteronomy 10.12, 13

A religious worldview

We have seen that the Biblical worldview which the Law of God presents is not confined to some narrowly “religious” aspect of human experience. It speaks to all of life, including how we worship and relate to God.

But the Biblical worldview is *religious* in its essential character. It glories in unseen things, adopts rituals and disciplines by faith to pursue those unseen things, and promotes an ethical way of life that we believe reflects the increasing attainment of those unseen things. We deceive ourselves and others if we try to present the Christian worldview as anything other than a *religious* approach to life. To suggest that it is merely the most *rational* way to live, or simply that approach to life which brings the most *satisfaction* and *happiness*, is certainly true. But when such arguments are used in lieu of, or to skirt the fact that the Christian worldview is a *religious* worldview, and that it demands *religious devotion* to achieve it, we are misleading people about the true nature of what we hope for, aspire to, and daily pursue.

The Christian worldview is a *religious* worldview. What God requires of us – to fear, obey, love and serve Him with all our heart and all our life – is *entirely* religious, and not just a little bit. But before we allow that to trouble us, or before we despair of ever persuading our secular neighbors to consider our religious worldview, we should consider that *every* worldview is a religious worldview.

What do we mean by saying this?

Like every other worldview

Every worldview is *religious*, although not every worldview is *spiritual*. The various expressions of a secular worldview – progressivism, conservatism, Marxism, conservationism, and so forth – are religious worldviews, but not spiritual. They are religious because, like all religions, they share certain features in common: a view of the good life, unseen but highly sought after; rituals and protocols and disciplines engaged to honor and pursue the vision of that which is most true and good; and systems of ethics by which adherents measure their progress and *bona fides* within their worldview.

In all worldviews, such visions, disciplines, and ethics are pursued *by faith*. No guarantees come with any worldview that their vision, disciplines, and outcomes are absolute and true. The guiding premises of a worldview are embraced as an act of faith, and faith is central to all religions, as it is to every worldview.

Like all religions, secular worldviews have their *high priests* – those whose calling it is to connect the rest of us with the good life – although they come in the garb of scientists, psychiatrists, educators, and politicians. Like all religions, secular worldviews have their *prophets and sacred texts*: Marx, Freud, Darwin, Adorno, Smith, Rorty, or whoever is being read and followed at any time. And like all religions, secular worldviews have their *sacred days* – April 15, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, graduation day, retirement. These days are observed as an act of faith, the belief that observing them is somehow crucially part of the path to the good life.

The word *religion* means “that which binds us back” to whatever we regard as the greatest or highest good we might know. Every vision of the good life is religious because it is unseen and hoped for: we know what we want, and though we have not yet achieved it, we know, think we know, what we need to do to get there. The

disciplines by which we pursue that vision are *religious*, and they are taken up as an act of *faith* that, by doing just these things, we will be able to achieve our unseen-but-hoped-for vision. Secular people even talk about following their plans and schedules and routines “religiously”, and in so saying, they are simply acknowledging the religious nature of their worldview.

True religion rather than false

The worldview of God’s Law is religious in that it intends to teach us how to enjoy the fullest benefits of a relationship with the living God – thus making our worldview not only religious, but spiritual as well. The worldview of God’s Law is anchored in a *vision of what is truly good* – God Who *is* good and the *good life* for which He has redeemed us. The Law of God, which is the foundation of our worldview, is not in the first instance, about how to be free or moral or secure or prosperous. It is about knowing and loving God and enjoying a right relationship with Him Whom we know to be supremely good. The blessings of obedience to God’s Law are first, foremost, and above all realized not in temporal circumstances or material things – which, like the branches of a bush, can entangle and snare us – but by entering the fiery glory of God and dwelling there in His presence, within His favor.

Moreover, the Law of God explains the *disciplines of life* which are essential for sustaining and improving that glory-filled relationship. As we have seen, every worldview prescribes a code of ethics and practices which adherents pursue in hopes of realizing whatever may be the vision of good they seek. We may not approach God in just any old way. There is a way first to enter the presence of God – through the blood of the Sacrificial Lamb, His Son – and a way to maintain and enlarge that experience, by faith and obedience to His Word, beginning with His Law.

Finally, the worldview represented in the Law of God is religious in that, like all religions, it manifests in *outward evidences of an inward vision and discipline*. The Biblical worldview of God’s Law comes to light in love for God and neighbors. The vision to which we long to be bound, closer and closer, becomes a lived reality in our everyday lives as we pursue, through daily discipline, knowledge of and obedience to Him Who has called us out of the darkness of sin into the fiery light of His Word and Presence. That obedience is invariably expressed as love, in some form or another, for God and our neighbors.

So, as believers, we do not apologize for the religious character of our worldview. Every worldview is religious in nature, in that every worldview is a faith venture in which proponents and adherents seek to bind themselves to or achieve an ultimate good. The Biblical worldview of the Law of God, however, has the distinct advantage of being pure and undefiled religion – a *true* worldview – as all know who have entered and begun to follow it.

Questions for reflection

1. Why do we say that all worldviews are religious? How can knowing this help us in explaining the Christian worldview to non-Christians?
2. How can you see that all worldviews require us to live *by faith*?
3. All worldviews are religious. But not all worldviews are spiritual. Why is it important for us to remember that the Christian worldview is both religious *and* spiritual?

Next steps – Preparation: How might you explain to an unbelieving friend that the secular worldview is a religious worldview? Write out your thoughts in a few sentences, then share them with a Christian friend.

7 A Worldview within Reach

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all my commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” Deuteronomy 5:29

God of the Law

In our next installment in this series on *Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, we will begin to unpack more of the details of the spiritual and religious worldview God has embedded in His Law. Following the framework we have outlined thus far, we will look first at the worldview *vision* which emerges in the Law of God. That vision focuses supremely on God Himself. The Law of God points us to God, reveals the character of God, explains His will, celebrates His grace and greatness, and calls us to enter His life of truth and goodness through the obedience of faith.

In His Law, God is revealed as the Creator and Ruler of the world, and the Giver of life, the good and true life which He intends for all creation. The initial words of Scripture, “In the beginning, God...” are the first words and orienting words of our Christian worldview.

And they are the first and orienting words of the Law of God as well. The Law of God bears witness above all to the God of the Law. As we begin to explore His Law, we will be continually reminded of Him Who is our source, purpose, substance, means, and hope.

Since we expect God’s Law to point us continually to Him – Who is gracious, generous, patient, tenderhearted, redeeming, and empowering – why should we doubt that immersing ourselves in His Law would be anything other than what He intends for us, to fill our lives with His truth and goodness? We must pray that God will give us a heart for Him and for all His Law, so that it may be well with us as we take up the worldview He reveals there.

Misreading the Law

Believers who are squeamish about the Law of God tend to see the Law as oppressive, merely external, and a hindrance to Christian joy. They regard keeping the Law as a trap or snare, a bridge-out approach to being saved that can only frustrate and defeat us, not to mention show us to be at odds with the temper of the times. The world is out of step with God’s Law. That much seems plain. Can we thus expect to win the world to our view of life and the world by demanding that they perform a complete *volte face* and begin living in a way other than what they have come to prefer? Do we not further alienate ourselves from our neighbors by clinging to a moral code that indicts them and their own worldview in so many ways?

Yet the issue in looking to the Law of God as the starting-point for our worldview is not whether it is comfortable or convenient for us to do so, but whether that Law and worldview are what God describes as true and good.

Which they are, because He is, Who gave us that Law and worldview. By looking to God, setting our hearts on Him, growing in fear of and love for Him, and discovering His faithfulness and lovingkindness at every turn, we will learn to trust His Law.

Let us therefore read the Law for what it tells us about *God*, and not for what it reveals about how out-of-step we may be with the world spirit of our times. God alone can provide the corrective we and our world need to be delivered from fear to trust, turmoil to peace, wastefulness to flourishing, and selfishness to love. And though He is high and exalted and full of holiness and unfathomable power and might, yet we may know and

love and serve Him, as we take up the life and world view to which He calls us, and which He has prepared for us, beginning in His Law.

Attainable love

God holds out the blessings of His Law as attainable for all who keep them, “that it might be well with them and with their children forever” (Deut. 5.29). Unless we believe that God delights in taunting or lying to us, we must embrace with joy the good He promises to those who keep His covenant, that we can actually know it, now and forever.

But obedience to God’s Law, and the realization of all it promises, begins in the heart. Unless God works in our hearts, to cut away the heart of stone and give us a heart of new flesh, we can never realize the full benefits of the Biblical worldview of His Law (cf. Deut. 30.1-10; Ezek. 36.26, 27). Unless God “enlarges” our heart – increases our love for Him and His Word – we shall have no inclination or ability to do what is pleasing to Him and beneficial for ourselves (Ps. 119.32; Phil. 2.13). And if we have no heart for God’s Law, then we do not have His Spirit (Rom. 8.5-9), and not having His Spirit, we have no true and eternal life in Him (1 Jn. 6.63).

Living within the blessed worldview outlined in God’s Law is thus, first of all, a matter of what we *most earnestly desire*. If we do not love God supremely, love Jesus and His Spirit above everything else, and His Law as His gift of love to us, then we will only delude ourselves by thinking that we can know His blessings by any other means. No amount of participation in Christian worship, church programs and ministries, daily devotions, or fellowship with other believers will yield the full blessings which obedience to His Law, from the heart, holds in store.

Jesus is the key. He came from beyond our time, by the grace of God, to redeem us and bind us back to God, give us a new heart, indwell us by His Spirit, teach us all His truth, and make us willing and able to do what pleases God. Through Him, through His righteousness and work within us, we may expect to know ever-increasing measures of full and abundant life, covenant blessings, and greatness in His Kingdom, as we learn, practice, and encourage one another in the Law of God (Matt. 5.17-19; Heb. 10.24).

Gaining the benefit of the Biblical worldview, which begins to be revealed in God’s Law, thus depends supremely on knowing, seeking, and following Jesus Christ. His true disciples will, in His power, walk the path of obedience to God’s Law which He Himself walked (1 Jn. 2.1-6).

Questions for reflection

1. Why is it important that we keep God as the focus of our Christian worldview?
2. Meditate on the first four of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20.1-11). What do we learn from just this much of God’s Law about the God Who gives us His Law?
3. God gave the Law. Jesus lived, taught, and commended it (Matt. 5.17-19; 22.34-40). The Holy Spirit teaches the Law and brings our thinking into submission to it (Ezek. 36.26, 27; Rom. 8.5-8). What shall we say about those who insist that the Law of God is no longer relevant to our lives as Christians?

Next steps – Preparation: Meditate on the fifth through the tenth Commandments (Ex. 20.12-17). What do you learn about God from these?

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. In what sense is the Christian worldview *spiritual*?
2. All worldviews are religious. Explain.
3. Can we live the Christian worldview apart from a loving relationship with God? Why not?
4. The Law of God tells us about the character of God. What does the character of God tell us about the Law, which He gave?
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

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Thank you.