



Why do people see the world different?

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Introduction to Biblical Christian Worldview

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1 Abstract

Why are some nations wealthy and others poor? Nations are not just what they are now. Nations were formed and changed through people. People how look to the world differently. They held different beliefs and therefore they built up different nations.

But why do people see the world differently?

If people look at the same abstract painting in an art museum they probably do not all see the same thing? Why is that?

People look at the world with two different sets of eyes. They look at it with their physical eyes and in this case they may all see the same thing. But they also look at the world with their inner eyes.

The inner eyes are the knowledge they already have in their mind before they look at a situation. These inner eyes will determine what people see, what they report and what they do. Therefore, the inner eyes determine what people will have and how nations will look like.

So, how can we then influence or change situations? We are able to build up or change them when we first try to change people's worldview, and not just their circumstances. Therefore, we have to know first what people believe and why they believe it. Otherwise, the prevalent culture and circumstances will shape us and we will always wonder why things happen or don't work out, and we will not be able to change the circumstances.

2 Introduction

For some, an abstract painting in an art museum is absurd and without value. To a businessman it would be a capital investment. He knows the painting is worth millions of dollars. A philosopher would see it with his inner soul. He can explain how this painting moves the hearts of people and let them see the real world behind the visible. He knows about the historical situation and the motivation of the painter. An average person may stand in front of this painting and see nothing. It has no value for him. Perhaps there is someone who met his wife in front of this painting. Whenever he sees it again he will remember this encounter. When this

observer sees the painting again, a film starts to play in his mind and therefore the painting is very important to him.

Thus, everyone sees something else even though they all look at the same painting at the same time. Why is that? People see the world with two different sets of eyes. With their physical eyes, they see what is really physically there. If all of them have the same perspective they all see the same. But people also look at things with their inner eyes. Their inner eyes are the knowledge that they already have in their mind.

This knowledge comes from different inputs: from other people, from books, from experiences in the past. Knowledge comes from the culture the observers live in.

The different observers might also go home and tell their friends about it. But each tells a different story according to what he saw even though all stood in front of the same painting at the same time.

The worldview people have of this painting is therefore not only what they see physically but also the knowledge they have about it. Everyone has such presuppositions before they see things physically and this determines what they perceive.

An observer may look at a picture of a slum. He sees poverty and a stinky, ugly and dirty place where nobody wants to live. A businessman might see a potential business opportunity: All these people need a house, a TV, a car and so on. A missionary might probably see all children in this slum are made in God's image. They all need God and a Bible. Let's go and invest into them. Why do people see it so differently? Because they look at it with their inner eyes and this will determine what they perceive.

People can analyse the Bible systematically but they probably do not all see the same things. Throughout the history a lot of people quarrelled about the right interpretation. But people always looked at it with their inner eyes as well. Those inner eyes were influenced by the past, by their own experience and by input from others. Therefore, reading the Bible systematically, inductively or historically will not guarantee people come to the same conclusions. The question is what people see with their inner eyes. What do they know about the Bible before they read the text?

Everyone has presuppositions. There is no neutral ground, as people often think. Instead of trying to be neutral, people should try to understand the concept of worldview. To understand how their inner eyes were formed, why they believe what they believe, and how it influences their interpretations and actions.

The inner eyes are their faith. Things people can't see with their physical eyes but they know. This faith was built up by things people heard, saw and experienced. People heard things again and again and they started to believe it. They experienced things and started to believe it, even though it might not be rational.

3 Worldview

3.1 What people believe will have consequences

A missionary went to Africa. He saw every year the flood came and destroyed the city. The people had to leave their houses and everything was destroyed. After the flood they came back and started to build houses again. There was no growing civilisation. The infrastructure was very poor because they had to start from scratch every year. The missionary talked to the people and wanted to help them. He advised them to build a dam that the river cannot flood the village again. But they didn't listen. One day he went to the chief of the village. The chief said to him: "What you are trying to do is very nice but we don't believe you. You think you can build a dam to protect us from the anger of the water god. But you cannot. He is powerful and will get angry if we do something like this. If we do it, it will be worse than before. Therefore, it will be better not to do it." Then the African chief said: "Western people don't know about the spiritual world. They are ignorant. Therefore, it is better for the white man to go back to his country and leave us alone."

The worldview of the Africans was different than the worldview of the missionary. The belief in spirits made the Africans blind to see the solution. The missionary could not change the circumstances. He was not able to show them that the world is not ruled by arbitrary forces but by a trustworthy God. The African Chief only understood a spiritual solution for the situation.

His view has to change first and then the missionary would have been able to change the circumstances in Africa. In contrast, Christians would build a dam against a flood. They would not oppose the gods. They would fulfil the mandate God

gave them. They would do it for God. Therefore, this Christian worldview made the West strong even though a lot of Westerners don't believe in it any longer.

Another missionary went to Africa and started a hygiene project. He told the Africans they should clean their hands because the bacteria in the dust and the dirt may be bad and make people sick. Therefore, people should wash their hand so that they wouldn't bring bacteria in the food and mouths. The Africans came to the nice presentation and did what he told them to do. They also came because they received good food. After a while the missionary went back home for holidays. Three months later he went back to Africa to look after his project. But what did he find? Did the Africans still wash their hands? No. He got angry and went to the chief of the village. He argued and complained. The chief told him: "You are a nice person and you give us good food. But you do not understand the world. You say the bacteria we cannot see make us sick. I will tell you what makes us sick. The gods are angry and therefore people get sick." The missionary argued with him and try to tell him there is no such thing.

Why should Africans believe in something they cannot even see with their own eyes? It is a question of worldview. Since the missionary could not address this issue he could not change the situation and the Africans continued without believing in bacteria. Those people still live in terrible circumstances. Their fatalism hinders them in building a stable hygiene system.

To change circumstances means therefore to first address the worldview of the people. If development workers cannot change the worldview of the people they cannot change their circumstances.

Often, people don't agree with this view. They want to help emotionally. They give a lot of resources and money to poor people and wonder why nothing changes in the long term. The West has spent a lot of money on foreign aid but things have not changed much in Africa. Some historians say it is now worse than before.

3.2 What do Christians believe?

Some Christians go to church for years and are involved in several ministries. They believe in God and patiently follow Jesus. They love him because they had good experiences. They often live in a subculture and the world is going its own way.

Today the world is secularized. Some may say, that's how it should be. But if we look history this was not always the case. Especially during the reformation, Christians influenced the entire society. They founded universities and laid the foundation for politics, modern science or the finance system.

Vishal Mangalwadi¹ said that in the last century, Christians became the most pessimistic, irrelevant and sceptical religion in the world. Rather than looking after God's creation, they just want to be saved and go to heaven. But why is it like this?

But why is it like this?

What do you believe? And why do you believe it?

Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists. (Heb 11:1)

Some think a belief is something man cannot prove or not know for sure. But the Bible defines it differently. Faith is something what people know for sure. They cannot see it but they are certain it exists. They know it with 100% certainty.

Before people can believe, they have to know it. And to know it means to think about it. They have to test it, examine it, to do research, read books and make logical conclusions. They have to be 100% certain with full assurance what they believe is true.

People may have heard Jesus healed a blind man. Some may believe it and some not. But why do people believe it? Perhaps some experience wonders because they saw it in person. But what about the people who do not experienced miracles? And I think it is the majority of people. They trust the Bible and the testimonies therein. They researched and tested it. They heard testimonies, so they believe it with 100% certainty. They believe it because they have information that was proven and researched.

Some people just do what comes to mind without thinking about it. They do things because they think they believe it. They think what they are doing is really godly and will please God. But they just act out of feelings and instinct and not necessarily of what is wrong or right.

Why they think it is godly? They know it because others told them about it. Media,

¹ The book that made your world, 2012, Vishla Mangalwadi

books, pastors or somebody else. They act according to what they heard.

Everything people do is therefore built on knowledge. They act according to their thinking but they do not necessarily test it. Their culture and circumstances just tell them what they have to do.

Some Christians don't really know what they believe. Because they often didn't think about what they believe others did it for them. Instead of Christians influenced the world, the world influenced Christians.

Christians may argue that they just do what the Holy Spirit tells them. But without mind, man will just be a puppet. C.S. Lewis called this the abolition of man². Human beings without spirit.

The Creator made humans as his partners so that they may think about the creation and take care of it. He made humans in order for them to have dominion over the world and guide his creation in a godly way. Therefore, he breathed his spirit, his mind into them. Man has to think about what is good and from God. Man should take dominion over the nature and not the other way around.

Some Christians think like the philosophers: they discover that people are corrupt in their thinking. This can be true. But the Creator wants to heal their thinking and not to erase it, like the Buddhists or the Phosphors try to do. The well-known theologian Kierkegaard said³.

"Therefore, the goal of religious people is to come in an existential relationship with God. This can only be done in faith. God as the Absolute is not subject to the causality of the world and therefore unknown to the human mind, it is rational not recognizable. Faith demands, as a condition, therefore, the "crucifixion of the intellect. The martyrdom of faith (to crucify one's reason) is not for a moment, but even the martyrdom of the continuity."

Some Christian may think like this. They believe just emotionally. Such Christians are much more influenced by the philosophy of the world rather than by the Bible. This would be another gospel, another way of bringing salvation to the world. They aim at erasing evil by killing the mind but the Creator has another plan. He brings

² C. S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man, 1943

³ Soren Kierkegaard 1813–1855 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%B8ren_Kierkegaard

restoration and heals the mind.

The prophets in the Old Testament accuse the Israelites not because of their lack of belief, but because of the lack of knowledge. This can be seen in the following passage in Isaiah:

Therefore my people go into exile because they lack understanding; my honoured men go hungry, and the crowd is parched with thirst. (Isa 5:13)

The Old Testament rarely deals with belief as such. Rather, God accuses the Israelites of forgetting him and not knowing him anymore.

To believe and to know belong together. The two cannot be separated. People know things because they believe it and they believe it because they know it.

Kierkegaard's misunderstanding greatly influenced today's Christians. It made them blind for the needs and problems of the world. It made them turn away from the world and they became irrelevant. Christianity became an unworldly religion where people want to flee from the world rather than bringing healing to the world.

Today Christians have almost no more answer to the problems in the world. They stand in churches look to situations and asking just why God let it happens.

3.3 The worldview of the Israelites determined their way

3.3.1 The worldview hindered them to enter the promise land

Moses sent out spies to the promised land⁴. They should find out more about the country. The spies should have been excited to see the God's promised land with their own eyes. But it turned out differently. Ten spies came back and were full of fear; fear of the many enemies living in the land. Yes, the land was beautiful but it would be impossible to seize it. The people living there are tall and stronger than us. We can never defeat them. But Caleb and Joshua saw something else. Even though all the spies went there together and saw the same thing with their physical eyes. But with their inner eyes Caleb and Joshua saw something else. They saw God's promise and his sovereignty. They remembered that God had led them out of Egypt and was there with them to protect them. Even though the Pharaoh didn't let them go, God helped them to leave Egypt. The ten other spies had had the same experience but they had probably forgotten it or did not believe it could happen

⁴ Numeri 13. 24–14.10

again. Joshua was always close to Moses and was trained to trust and listen to God. Perhaps, the others only saw many things happening around them but they were not trained to look up to God. They saw all the difficulties and challenges in the world and were not able to see the big picture. Their worldview was different from Joshua's and Caleb's worldview.

This worldview led them to perceive something else. Those ten spies spread their worldview and people started to believe it. The people were convinced by their arguments and they did not want to go into the promise land anymore. They would rather go back to Egypt. God became very angry and let the folks walk through the desert until the whole generation, all who were over 20 years old at that time, had died. What the Israelites believed determined their future.

3.3.2 Abraham's worldview made him reach

Abraham⁵ became the richest man in his time. But why? He dug for a well because he couldn't find water. To him, it was clear the Creator will take care of him and will give him what he needs. Therefore, he could use his spirit God had given to him to create new things. He was a partner of God in taking care of his creation. By way of this view, he was able to look for things which were not physically visible. He dug wells because he believed in the Creator. The Philistines, on the other hand, fill the wells up again. They had the same belief system as the Africans. They were afraid of the god of water and did not believe that they could change their circumstances. They were afraid Abraham would oppose the gods of the Philistines. Their worldview didn't allow the Philistines to be successful. Thus, Abraham became the richest man because he had another worldview. He already knew God and could trust him. He had already received a revelation from God. The worldview determined the future of Abraham and the Philistines.

3.3.3 God changes Abraham's worldview

Abraham grew up in a pagan culture in the city of Ur, which was the centre of worship and the big gods at the time. His father was probably a priest in their temple and made sacrifices to their gods. At that time, people believed the gods determine their lives. When something terrible happened, they believed the gods are angry. They tried to make the gods happy again by sacrificing.

⁵ Genesis 26. 12–22

When there was no rain, they thought the rain god was angry. When every offering didn't work and the rain didn't come they had to resort to the purest offering: They sacrificed a son. The best and purest sacrifices were young boys. Once the rain came back they were convinced that the offering had alleviated the anger of the gods. Even though this was a horrible practice it was the only solution they knew of.

God now called Abraham to sacrifice his son⁶. To Abraham, this request was not as abnormal as it is for people nowadays. But then God stopped him and provide him with a ram. Abraham received a revelation from God. God told him: "I am not like the other gods. I don't want you to sacrifice your son. I will let it rain just trust me. I am the Creator and the giver of everything. I am a God of life and I don't want these sacrifices." This experience changed Abraham's view more forcefully than a simple word from God would have done. Abraham received a new worldview through revelation and experience. Though experience, God changed Abraham's worldview.

People in the Middle Ages were usually afraid when the sun begun to disappear around Christmas. The nights became longer and the days shorter. They wondered how long it would take until the sun was gone completely. Thus, they had to make the purest sacrifice in order to stop it and to make the god of the sun happy again. They sacrificed a child. Even though it was an awful action, to them it was the only solution. After they did it, the sun came back. Over many generations they kept this practice and believed these sacrifices it brought the sun back every year.

However, St Patrick⁷ convinced them that they didn't have to do it. He told them, the sun will come back because God promised it. It will come back because God created the universe like this. They believed it and stopped these awful rituals. They became Christians and started to believe in the Creator. St Patrick replaced the god of the sun with God's son. The Christian worldview changed the view of the Celts. It was the beginning of the Western Civilization where people started to rule the world instead of letting nature rule them.

3.4 The mind justifies what the heart has already chosen

There is another important issue which people in the West are often not aware of: People justify what they have already chosen in their hearts⁸. People often defend

⁶ Gen 22.1–4

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Patrick

⁸ Mt 6.21

what they have already chosen in their heart with all their strength, with great effort and many arguments. They will defend what they love and what they believe.

How do people start loving something? They probably heard Allah is great all the time and they start to believe it. Later, they start to love it. Not because of emotional love. Rather, they start to love it because they became familiar with it through their tradition. Loving is not just a matter of emotion; it is also a matter of culture.

People defend their position because they love it. The mind is arguing in line with what the heart has already chosen. Someone who loves chocolate will try to come up with a lot of arguments as to why people should buy chocolate even if it is not rational. He does it because he loves it.

But if other people tell them chocolate has too much sugar and the sugar is not from fair trade and the milk makes fat. People start to think about it and choose to stop loving chocolate. They stop loving it because they started to believe it is not good, not right and not just. They stop eating chocolate because they have new information. The information changed their love and their worldview about chocolate.

3.5 Renewing our worldview

Christians should not just love what they love emotionally. They should change their love and faith according to what God loves and according to what the Bible tells.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1–2)

The Bible says by renewing of the minds Christians are able to understand what God's will is—what is proper, pleasing, and perfect.

Therefore, a Christian is called to rethink and test what he hears and knows, so he would be able to test and find out what is right or wrong. He has to test his assumptions according to the biblical standard. Through this process he will be transformed.

This process does not seem to be very complicated but it is hard to change one's belief system. It's hard to be willing to rethink and test the things we loved and have believed for many of years. It seems to be a spiritual battle, just as Paul describes it in the second letter to the Corinthians⁹.

2Co 10:3–6 Of course, we are living in the world, but we do not wage war in a world-like way. For the weapons of our warfare are not those of the world. Instead, they have the power of God to demolish fortresses. We tear down arguments and every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive in order to obey the Messiah. Once your obedience is complete, we will be

We are fighting against the spirit of knowledge who wants to keep us away from truth. Therefore, we should take every thought captive in order to obey the Messiah.

People cannot simply read a book about worldview. It has to put into practice in one's daily life. Learn to rethink is a battle in the mind. A battle between evil and good between thoughts from God and evil thoughts. It is a battlefield with no neutral ground. There is no collaboration. Both sides either have to win or to lose. Therefore, it would be wise to be trained before stepping onto this battlefield. This is what a worldview school is meant to do. Worldview is a life journey. It is a fight against manipulation and against things that want to keep people away from the truth.

Christians has to be ready to start this journey and ask themselves whether the things they love are really worthy of love.

3.6 The worldview tree

We could illustrate this process with a tree or rather a worldview tree. At first, people may just see the apple hanging on the tree. But the fruit is only the product of the tree. The fruits are good when they hang on strong branches, when the tree has a strong trunk and the roots are healthy. The branches are the resources and

⁹ Of course, we are living in the world, but we do not wage war in a world-like way. For the weapons of our warfare are not those of the world. Instead, they have the power of God to demolish fortresses. We tear down arguments and every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive in order to obey the Messiah. Once your obedience is complete, we will be ready to reprimand every type of disobedience. (2Co 10:3–6)

the infrastructure people do not see that easily. But these things are very important that good apples can grow.

But where the strong infrastructures come from? They come from good values and a good character. Let's imagine a company, for example, where people trust one another, employees are honoured. If someone were to examine this company, they would find the specific values held by these people and this company. This is the tree trunk. But where do these values come from? They come from good roots. The roots are not visible but they keep the tree strong. The roots are the worldview of the people. The inner eyes of humans. People don't see the roots but they are the most important element in order to produce good fruits. If a factory poisons the ground, the roots would not get good nourishment and the tree would not bear good fruit. Now we have to ask where the roots get their nourishment from.

It is the same with our lives: The most important thing is not visible. Fruit is readily visible. The infrastructure and values can be researched. But what about the belief system underlying all this? Where does it come from? If we want to have healthy fruit then we have to have healthy roots. Roots have different branches and every branch is a symbol of things that influenced people. One branch could symbolize the media. Others might symbolize school, parents, friends or the church. There are many different types of influence in the culture that nourish the worldview of people. Whatever nourishes the roots determines the nature of the values and infrastructure and of the fruit.

Therefore, it would be good to start this journey now: in order to learn, to think, to research and figure out why we believe what we believe and where all our nourishment comes from.

3.7 How can we find out what is good?

How can people be sure what they believe is the truth? They need the courage to ask some questions and to be ready to lay down their own beliefs and the things they love.

Perhaps they used to believe in Santa Claus. But then they realized this is not the truth. He does not exist.

Perhaps some friends told you people could be homosexual. But how do they know this? Is it truth?

People have to realize they have a lot of cultural beliefs in their lives formed throughout the last several years. People have now to start thinking independently and to test what they believe. If people do not take responsibility and start to think about what truth is, they are just a victim of civilisation. They simply believe what their civilisation is telling them. But there is a solution: There is an absolute truth, a standard with which people can measure and test their own beliefs. But the question is do we believe in this standard.

I used to be a carpenter. As a carpenter I could never go to work to the construction site without a measuring stick. Without a means to measure things a carpenter is useless. He could never figure out where he has to cut the wood that it will fit. First, he has to measure the distance and then he can go to the wood, make a mark and cut it off at the right length.

It is the same with humans: People need an absolute measuring stick to decide on their own what is good or bad. Otherwise people are just a puppet on a string moved by the culture or by the people who speak the loudest.

This absolute standard is the Bible, the revelation from God. It is an absolute truth not revealed by man but by God. Therefore, it is above humans. This absolute standard gives Christians the possibility to distinguish what is good or bad, to test beliefs and cultures.

Thus, people have to ask some questions to find out their own worldview and then to find out if it matches the biblical worldview. First of all, they have to ask how they know what they know? Why do people believe what they believe? What influenced them and where did this information come from? Did it come from media, parents, pastors, school, the Bible or friends? How do they know what they know? Are they really certain of what they have heard? People have to start thinking critically. Not in a cynical and pessimistic manner.

Another important question would be: what is the highest value? Do we know what we live for? What is the purpose of life? Why should people endure suffering to pursue a goal? Why should they go to war and fight? What do they struggle for? What is their motivation? Are the things people deem important in the world really that important?

Or, what is the goal? What do we sacrifice and invest our lives for? Do our efforts have long-term influence? Are we building for the next generation? What does the future look like? Why should people suffer and refrain when there is nothing to gain?

Another question would be to ask where people come from. Where does the universe come from? Do people have an answer in line with reality? Some may think this is not important and no one can know for sure. But it makes sense to have a look at the foundations of a house before you consider buying it. The fundamentals are the starting point. It will determine how the building will turn out. When people don't know about this, they might build something too heavy for the fundamentals or they may miss the opportunity to build something really big. To know the fundament is the the most important thing for the construction of a stable house.

To know how everything came into existence will determine what people think and believe. If everything was brought into existence by a natural process, why should people believe humans are different from animals? They are in fact different but people may start to believe that they are merely at a different stage in the evolutionary process but not fundamentally different.

Also, it is very important to understand where evil comes from. If people do not understand it they cannot find solutions to fight evil. They might find several philosophical answers but they will still wonder why their solutions don't work in reality.

Finally, in order to figure out someone's worldview it is important to ask what the problem is with humanity. Most people would agree that there is a problem in the world. But what is it? Where does it come from? And how can we solve it? When you see the solution people come up with, you can determine their worldview.

If people find the right questions to ask they might find the underlying worldview. If they find the underlying worldview they are able to understand the underlying problem. If they understand the underlying problem they understand to bring a long-term solution to the world. They understand why thing function and why not.

There is a danger that people become critical and pessimistic about everything. People start to become critical because they want to find the truth. People are not fighting against other people but against the evil that hinders them from seeing the truth.

If people don't believe in truth anymore they become sceptical and cynical towards every person who claims to know the truth. Therefore, people don't trust each other anymore. The only thing that can be done in such a world is to convince people emotionally. When truth is gone, everyone can believe what he or she wants to believe. A debate is no longer held to determine truth; it will only be about rhetoric. The one who is the best salesman and who can move people emotionally will win the debate. In such a world there is no ethical, moral foundation anymore. Everything can be true or false. In such a world there is no more good or evil. It is just a question of emotion.

Sartre said¹⁰ in the end it doesn't matter if people overrun an old Lady or help her over the street. Nobody can claim something is right or wrong anymore. Nobody can hold someone accountable. Everyone just does whatever he or she feels like doing.

Nietzsche¹¹ said, if God is dead morality is dead too. The only accepted moral standard is that the one who has power can do whatever he wants to. The Western world arrived exactly at this point. The world is increasingly ruled by big finance institutes and by those who are able to influence media or politics.

This culture is similar to the beginning of the Greek Philosophy where Socrates blamed the politicians. He claimed that a democracy is not better than a dictatorship. In a democracy everything can be right. Thus, it is not a matter of truth; it is about the power to influence people. The one who has the most influence will win the debate. The politicians didn't like Socrates and forced him to drink poison or leave the city. He chose to drink the poison rather than leaving the city.

4 Some cultural examples

4.1 What do people think love is?

Jesus was asked what the most important thing in life is¹². He replied: it is love. How do people nowadays define "love"? Some may associate love with a sexual relationship. Others may think love is a feeling. Movies and songs focus almost exclusively on this type of love. They show emotional love, which comes and goes¹³. Love might presently exist between two people but they never know whether it will

¹⁰ Jean Paul Satre 1905-1980

¹¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche 1844-1900

¹² Mar 12:29–33 form Deu 6:5

¹³ Sara Evans, you Never Know, 2014, album Slow me down

last. When a married couple does not have any emotional love for one another anymore it is probably better to separate. Therefore, people should not be surprised when relationships break down. They believe they cannot influence love and the outcome of a relationship.

Now, when a pastor holds a great sermon on love, not all people may understand this the same way. Some may think people should love everyone and will therefore sleep around. But Jesus really meant something else: Love is something you can do, it is an action. When Jesus called people to love one another he always used the Greek word "agape". "Agape" is an action¹⁴. Jesus called people to love their enemies. Loving enemies is not a feeling but a step of obedience. Thus, people's worldview will determine how they understand a sermon.

A lot of Christians view love through the lens of Hollywood. When those Christians cannot feel God's love, they think he doesn't love them. But God's love does not depend on feelings or emotions. He loves people because it is in his nature to love them. Sometimes Christians make God angry but he will not stop to loving them.

People's worldview will determine what they hear in a sermon. Therefore, a preacher must be wise and understand the worldview of his audience before he starts to preach. Otherwise he runs the risk of people misunderstanding him.

Sometimes people are surprised when their listeners don't do what they told them to do. But when people do not consider their listener's worldview they might never be able to teach them. People have to understand what other people believe before they can teach them.

4.2 How does our culture see the future?

In his first letter in the Bible John said¹⁵: Stop loving the world and the things in the world. The world and its desires are declining, but the person who does God's will, remains forever.

The worldview question would be how people understand the word "world". In Greek, the word "world" is "cosmos". The Greek word has four different meanings.

¹⁴ Greek has four words for love: agápe, éros, philía, and storgē. Agape would express the best the love that is bound on the will, the action and not on emotions.

¹⁵ 1Jn 2:15–17

The question is which interpretation people use here. All of them would be right in a literal sense.

"Cosmos" means "order", the opposite of chaos. First, it means the order of the world, God's creation¹⁶. Second, the order people create in the world such as politics, infrastructure and so on. The third meaning is the order in man himself. Do people have a clear way of thinking? Do they have a disciplined life? Do they know what they believe and why they believe it? The meaning people choose, will now determine how they understand this passage.

Christians who believe in dispensationalism would go for the first interpretation and think the world will collapse and Christians will go to heaven. Why should they take care of creation when the whole creation will collapse anyway one day? Can these people be relevant for the world or does this view not make Christians blind for the real world? I would prefer the second or especially the third interpretation. God will put an end to evil. This is his promise. But I do not believe the whole world will be destroyed. He will overthrow the order made by evil. He will bring his order to disorder. God will bring restoration to his whole creation. He will not allow the devil to win over his creation.

All three interpretations would be right in a literal sense but they would have different consequences. So, who is right? It is not a question of the text is a question of worldview.

The interpretation God will restore the whole creation would also be in line with the rest of the letter and with the whole Bible. It is important not only look at the text. Christian have to see it in the context of the bible and embedded in the culture of the time. Therefore, I would advise Christians to not interpret it the way the dispensationalists do.

¹⁶ The more common word in the N.T. is κόσμος. In the Greek scribes, it means "order," "regularity," or "jewelry." In 1 Peter 3: 3, it is translated into jewels, and the heavens and the earth are called cosmos because of their order and beauty, This word is used in the different meanings, for example for the material earth (Rom 1,20), for the inhabitants of the earth who are judged (Rom 3: 6) and in the moral sense for the God opposite state and spirit 1 Cor 2: 12, James 4: 1, 1 John 2:16).

4.3 How do Christians see their call to mission?

Christians often quote the Great Commission. But does everyone understand it in the same way? Let us analyse it and figure out how a biblical Christian worldview of this verse could look like.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(ESV Mat 28:19–20)

Usually, Christians think they should go to all nations and baptize all people and tell them the gospel to be saved. That is the common worldview amongst Christians. But the original text says Christians should teach nations and baptize them. The verse says Christians should baptize nations. So how can they baptize nations? That most probably doesn't mean to flood a city with water in order to baptize it. It probably means people should baptize the nations with the teaching of God, with his wisdom and knowledge. To teach them the things Jesus commanded Christians to do. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said that he didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfil it.¹⁷

Thus, the Great Commission is not just about baptizing people with water and make them believers. It is not just about individual people. "To baptize" is probably meant as a symbol for a greater mission. By building up a good political system, a professional education, strong businesses and a good infrastructure. It means Christians should teach the nations the law of the Bible, namely, the Torah that God gave to the tribes of Israel in order to build up a nation.

This is a question of worldview. May people would disagree with me. My worldview is probably different than yours and so the interpretation of the text is different. Therefore, the big question is what you believe and what your worldview is and not what the text says. If people have been culturally influenced Christians should just have to baptize all people, then the text would say so. But when people read this in the context of the whole Bible, they may find another interpretation.

This view will determine what Christians do. Some of them might go to every nation and save souls, because this would be the most important thing to do. But I would

¹⁷ Mat 5:17–20 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.

go to the nations and build houses and streets and invest in politics and education. My worldview is telling me the most important thing for Christians are to build up God's Kingdom, to teach all nations and baptize them with the spirit of God in order to obey his commandment.

So which view is right? Both sides have the same Bible and read the same text. But because the worldview is different the application will be different. To find out who is right cannot be done by quarrelling about the text. You can only figure it out if you address the worldview and start to ask yourself why people believe what they believe. Why do people have this interpretation and others another interpretation?

4.4 The worldview of other cultures

I was in India on a mission trip. I stood on a box and started to preach how God wants to heal people and liberate them from evil. People believed me and came to convert. I realized they also came the next day and the next day. Years later, I understood they didn't understand what I said. They already lived in a world of spirits and gods. They believed these gods could heal them. But it didn't happen. Now someone came and offered them another god who could heal them. They now tried this god as well. But they didn't change their worldview. They went back and offered to all the other gods too. They found Jesus in a spiritual, invisible world but their practical life didn't change. They believed in this God but they didn't change their behaviour and their rituals.

In the West missionaries have to convince people there is an immaterial spiritual world and in India they have to convince people there is a real creation and people have to take care of it. In India the people already lived in spiritual world. For them is this not something new; it is their daily life. Without understanding the worldview of the audience, there is a danger that missionary work will not be successful. People will come to God and sing songs but they will not change their lives.

Even today, if people look at relevant statistics of development in the world they observe the areas where Christianity could spread civilisation are more successful. It shows the worldview is therefore the most important issue to look at in order to address cultural developments.

Christianity has the ability to change the whole world. It feet to the Creator and therefore it feet the best to reality. But do Christian still understand it and influence the future in the world or is it not the other way around?

5 Conclusion

I hope you realised by reading these pages that worldview is a really important subject. People will act on what they believe. They do things according to their own worldview. People look at the same painting but see something really different. They look at it not just with their physical eyes but also with their inner eyes.

Nations are not just to be taken as is. They are a product of what people believe and what they do. Their worldview shaped their nations. If now people want to change its they first have to address people's worldview.

Often people don't know what they believe but deep inside they are persuaded of something. Everyone believes something; either consciously or unconsciously. All people have presuppositions. The deepest conscious or unconscious assumptions about reality. To be convinced about certain things are really true, worthy and important.

The point of worldview teaching is to make people realize everybody has a worldview and their worldview determines the thinking, change individuum, families and finally whole nations.

These ideas are not very common today and people just follow their own culture. It seems people are no longer doing the hard, humble work of understanding why they believe what they believe. But when people do not know what they believe and why they believe it, they will simply be a puppet controlled by those who are aware of their own worldview.

The question is if you have the right worldview to change the nations. Do you know what you believe and why you believe it?

If Christians do not rise up and walk this path, they will not come to the point of becoming relevant to the world. Instead of being salt and light and influence the world they will just be influenced by the world.

The West is still walking in the footsteps of their forefathers who had a biblical Christian worldview. But what will the next generation produce?

Therefore, I warmly welcome you to the worldview school. You can apply on our website: www.sbcw.ch. For more information please contact us: sbcw.wiler@jmemwiler.ch.