

## Tough Question Week 18 – What is a Worldview? Part 2

Tim Perry here, Pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church coming at you with Part 2 of Week 18 Tough Questions.

The question we're dealing with this week has to do with worldview. If you don't know what a worldview is and you missed the first video from this week, back up and look at that one before you watch this one.

In this video, what I want to do is build on our definition of worldview and compare Christian Theism to Naturalism – two very prevalent worldviews in our world today.

Well, there's this story – it's a famous story from the history of Harvard and its development. There was a president at Harvard in the late 1800's who was responsible for building a new philosophy hall. He named it after Emerson – Ralph Waldo Emerson – the famous transcendentalist. But he was at the end of the project and they were getting ready to put the inscription above the doorway at the lecture hall, and he wanted to know what should that inscription say? One suggestion was a quote from a Greek philosopher named Protagoras and Protagoras was famous for his agnosticism about the gods. In his day and age – everybody believed in a whole pantheon of gods. He questioned that worldview himself. He was a radical humanist. He stated that mankind doesn't need God at all to understand the world around him. And so his famous statement – *"Of all things the measure is man."* So if you're the president of Harvard and you're trying to figure out what do I put above the doorway of the philosophy hall that I'm dedicating this summer – this was one of the suggestions that -he was given.

But actually, he chose a different caption to go above the doorway. He chose something from our reading this week – Project 4:4. He chose something from Psalm 8 and it's this quote: *"What is man that you are mindful of him?"* I want to read you that Psalm and then talk about the contrast between these two worldviews – Christian Theism and Naturalism. Let me just read Psalm 8 to you if you don't mind.

LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
in the heavens.

<sup>2</sup>Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

(and here's where our quote comes from)

<sup>3</sup>When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

<sup>4</sup>what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup>You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

<sup>6</sup>You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:

<sup>7</sup>all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,

<sup>8</sup>the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup>LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

As it turns out this week, if you read the Psalms that are in our Project 4:4 reading, they are rich with worldview implications. They paint a picture of reality for us that shapes how we see things – we can agree with it – we can disagree with it. But I thought I'd take the opportunity to compare these two worldviews – Naturalism and Christian Theism.

I want to make a little chart here with you in just a couple of minutes that are left on our video. When we think about these two worldviews and ask some of our basic worldview questions, what does the comparison actually look like?

One of the first questions that you remember Dr. Sire posed as a part of our worldview is – **“What is prime reality?”** What is at the very floor of everything in our consideration of reality? In terms of Christian Theism, of course, we would answer that question with God. Not just God in some vague sense, but God who is personal. A God who is transcendent and here’s one last word I’ll throw at you – a God who is immanent. A transcendent nature of God means he is above and beyond everything because he created everything, but the immanent nature of God means that He is involved in his creation. He may not be visible all time everywhere, but He is present and engaged in his creation. He’s not identified with His creation though, that would be monism, an entirely different worldview. He’s separate from what He’s made, but actively involved in it – actively watching everything that takes place.

Now by comparison – what is prime reality for the Naturalist? Prime reality for the Naturalist is simply in the words of Carl Sagan, the famous astrophysicist – the Cosmos. That’s the only word we need to write on the board. The cosmos, Carl Sagan would say, is all there every was, all there is and all that every will be. It’s just the reality that we see around us. There’s no creation of that reality – it’s always existed in some form or another. Energy and matter have always gone back and forth in some kind of evolutionary process that has given us the universe that we see now. Some people call that the Big Bang – some people call that the string theory in terms of how universes can expand and collapse over millions and millions and billions and billions of years. But in terms of prime reality – it’s all just a matter of the material universe that we see.

Now what do we ask when we ask our next question here – **“Who or what is mankind?”** In Christian Theism – mankind of obviously personal, but he derives his personality from being made in the image of God. There’s a fancy term for this that we call “Imago Dei”. He is also a self-conscious being. He’s aware of himself and his own personality and he’s also a moral being.

Now how does that compare with Naturalism? With Naturalism, it shares a lot of the same ideas about humanity. Naturalism would agree that people are personal beings, people are self-aware, and people are even moral beings in a Naturalistic worldview. But the distinction between Naturalism and Christian Theism has to do with whether or not people are created somehow in the image of a personal god. What is the source of our personality? – drastically different theories in the terms of the Christian Theistic worldview and the

Naturalistic worldview. In Naturalism, we're just the highest evolved species on the planet and everything can be defined or described in an evolutionary model in terms of why people are the way they are. In Christian Theism – people are the way they are because they were designed that way – created that way by God.

Then our last question up here for consideration – we won't dwell too long on it is – **“What is the Nature of External Reality?”** What is the nature of the world around us or the universe, let's say? Well in Christian Theism – it's actually something that's created by God, and it's endowed with certain properties that God intended for it. It's created not only for God's own enjoyment, but it's created to reflect something about God's order, His beauty and His ability as an artist to create things. But another thing that is true in Christian Theism about creation is that it is also fractured or broken. Part of what happened when humanity rebelled against God and when angelic creatures rebelled against God – is that there were actual implications for creation for the created order, and that ever since that point in time, there have been fractures even in the physical universe that one day will be remade. So the flaws that we see in our material world – are actually temporary flaws that are one day going to be remade by God. If God created the universe – if He created the heavens and the earth in the first place – He has the power and capacity and the purpose to recreate those things someday.

Well in Naturalism, our worldview is shaped by what Carl Sagan tells us. The Cosmos just exists – it's all there ever was. Our own little tiny solar system is going to snuff itself out someday when our sun ages out and explodes. In terms of where we're all headed – our planets and our universe is all determined. It's pre-determined – it's just a huge, vast complicated piece of machinery that's going to wear out some day. Maybe it will collapse in on itself and somehow recreate itself, but there's nothing behind it – there's no real design that anyone up there is actually engineering or working.

So why is it so important to talk about worldviews and how Christian Theism differs from Naturalism? Well, it depends upon who you are. If you're a Christian and if you're trying to work out your whole worldview in our world today – depending on where you're situated – you really need to understand Naturalism because Naturalism is the dominate worldview of our entire university system. We live in a secular culture in the United States. That secularism is driven by in large by a Naturalistic worldview. As a Christian Theist, we need to understand that – people out there outside of the church don't

understand how Christians think and where they're coming from because they have a radically different worldview. And as Christians sometimes we really struggle to understand where other people are coming from. We have to realize that there's an entire framework in people's thinking that may be very, very different than ours. And part of what we're responsible for – if we are a Christian – is to research and understand Naturalism as a worldview. I've probably done a pretty sloppy job of representing what Naturalism is about up here, but if we don't even have those categories – if we don't even walk up to people and compare our glasses with their glasses, we could be talking past each other – creating all kinds of misunderstanding.

So my tough question for you this week is – **“What is your worldview?”** Where are you coming from – and how does that affect how you ask and answer difficult questions? Whether you're reading your Bible or whether you're reading your newspaper – we all bring our worldview into consideration when we answer these big questions.

Well, this has been Tim Perry, Pastor of Spiritual Discovery, at Christ Community Church. Thanks for watching – we'll see you next week.