

Class 6, “How Shall We Now Think?”

Overview of Tonight’s Class: Tonight’s class is the sixth and final class in the course, “The Christian Worldview.” Tonight, we will attempt to address the tragedy of utopian thinking in false worldviews, and we will seek to outline the covenantal promise of God in the Christian eschatos.

Etymology of Tonight’s Class Title: Tonight’s talk title comes from a derivation of a book title by Francis Schaeffer, “*How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (1976).” As Schaeffer follows the development of Western Civilization through the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and the modern era, he shows a remarkable rise and an equally remarkable decline of Western thought and civilization. As he does this, he shows how Christianity as a worldview formed the foundation of Western thought and civilization, and with the decline of Christianity, so the decline of Western civilization. There are two sub-themes in view tonight in this talk. First, there is the tragedy of false utopias. Second, we will look at the Christian covenantal promise concerning the end of human history and the kingdom of God. Our approach to the two subthemes is under the heading of, “How Shall We Now Think?”

1. Do we Christians understand and embrace the Christian Worldview?
2. How is the Christian Worldview manifest in our Christian lives and our church life?
3. How do Christians live in a society and culture that is not only defined by un-Christian thought, but also by increasingly anti-Christian thought?
4. How can Christians and the church maintain the true Christian Worldview and pass it on for future generations?

These are the questions and issues before us tonight.

Summary Explanation of all Non-Christian Worldviews as Relates to Vision of the Future: My intent in these worldview talks is to primarily focus our attention on the Christian Worldview. In doing so, it has been necessary to address briefly and superficially non-Christian Worldviews. I am thinking that it may be helpful later on in another study in some future date to do a study of the modern secular philosophy that feeds into our present situation. I have addressed this in previous talks entitled, “How We Got Here.” You may find these helpful.

But, at this juncture I want to show a summary essential (core component) of all non-Christian philosophies and ideologies as they relate to their vision of the future of the human race. To understand this is to be troubled about where our non-Christian society is, and where it is going.

Before stating the core vision of the future by non-Christian worldviews, I want to quote from Francis Schaeffer’s book referenced earlier (“*How Should We Then Live?*”) in his chapter on “Manipulation and the New Elite (pages 228-229).” He refers to psychological and sociological theory by B. F. Skinner. Schaeffer states the following about Skinner’s views:

“The ideas of sociological determinism, primarily involving conditioning were widely discussed after B. F. Skinner published his book, “Beyond Freedom and Dignity” (1971). His thesis was that all that people can be explained by the way their environment has conditioned them. Since society plays a special and an important role in that environment, society can and should use positive stimuli to bring about the society it wants. That this was meant not only to be a theory, but to be put into use is shown by his (Skinner’s) early book, “Walden Two” (1948), a novel.

In "Walden Two" Skinner's utopia was a totally conditioned society. The director of the society, "T. E. Frazier, manipulated everyone to control all the details of the society. He made the people think they wanted what he had decided they and society itself should be. In this and all other forms of determinism, man dies. In fact, Skinner himself acknowledged that what is being abolished is man. He says to man: 'Good riddance'. Skinner (like others, such as Bertrand Russell) retains only the value of biological continuity. Survival is the only value according to which a culture is eventually to be judged."

Humanist Manifesto I (1933): *"The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, the undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate." The very first tenet of the Manifesto (First) is the assertion of the eternal existence of the universe and the denial of creation: "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created."*

Humanist Manifesto II (1973): *"The next century can be and should be the humanistic century. Dramatic scientific, technological, and ever-accelerating social and political changes crowd our awareness. We have virtually conquered the planet, explored the moon, overcome the natural limits of travel and communication; we stand at the dawn of a new age, ready to move farther into space and perhaps inhabit other planets. Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life."*

"Traditional moral values...fail to meet the pressing needs of today and tomorrow. False "theologies of hope" and messianic ideologies, substituting new dogmas for old, cannot cope with existing world realities. They separate rather than unite peoples."

"A humanist outlook will tap the creativity of each human being and provide the vision and courage for us to work together. This outlook emphasizes the role human beings can play in their own spheres of action...Humanism can provide the purpose and inspiration that so many seek; it can give personal meaning and significance to human life."

"We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of survival and fulfillment of the human race. As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity...We need, instead, radically new human purposes and goals...Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful...We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction...Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses."

Outlining some inbred ideas contained in this example, we find a broad commonality found in all non-Christian worldviews, as they relate to their vision of the utopian future for humanity.

1. They assume that there is no God, no absolutes, and no transcendent reality to which we should conform.
2. They believe that humans are machines, and nothing more, a part of an eternal material universe operating by random and arbitrary powers and laws.
3. They do not carve out the possibility that those who disagree with them might possibly be right. Thus, they assume their views as absolutely right and necessary, establishing a context for coercion and punishment for all who will oppose their views. They thus believe that the right choice must be forced upon them through either manipulation or coercion.

Now, I want to lay out before you a general idea contained in the Christian Worldview's vision of the future and how it applies to Christians and the church.

The Christian Vision of the Future Kingdom

Before going into specifics concerning the Christian worldview and the nature and destiny of history, perhaps we need to discuss briefly the greatest overarching Christian viewpoint concerning reality and history.

Christianity not only insists and teaches that there is a God, but that He is the One only True God, and He invades time and space for His redemptive purposes in human experience and history. This includes:

1. Creation
2. Redemptive covenant history in the Old Testament
3. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ
4. The formation of the Church, Christ's body
5. The power of the gospel in the work of the Holy Spirit in the church in history
6. The second coming of Jesus Christ initiating the Eschatos and all that pertains to it (we will discuss the Eschatos below)

We don't typically talk about the Christian utopia, although it might be appropriate to do so. The term, "utopia," is not a biblical word, but if we assume that the word means a state of perfection, then we might indeed apply it in Christian thought concerning the future. The Christian faith promises that there is coming a utopia of a Christian nature when Christ reigns in righteousness, truth, and love for the entire world. The Christian Worldview promise for the world, we use a term called ESCHATOS. This is an English transliteration of a Greek word that means, LAST THINGS. For our purpose, we will use "eschatos" to refer to every and all aspects of the promise of God given to His people for the anticipation of the coming kingdom and its joys forever. We will organize our thoughts tonight on the Christian view of the Eschatos to the following four categories:

1. The Eschatos and the Lord Jesus Christ
 - 1) The Person of Jesus Christ as the God-Man in human history
 - 2) Jesus Christ bringing the kingdom of God on earth through the gospel
 - 3) This includes the active righteousness of Jesus Christ
 - 4) This includes the truth teachings of Jesus

- 5) This includes the crucifixion of Jesus for:
 - (1) The forgiveness of sins
 - (2) The justification of believers
 - (3) The defeat of evil
 - 6) The exaltation of Jesus Christ, as Lord of all:
 - (1) Resurrected from the dead
 - (2) Ascended to heaven to take His rightful place of authority
 - (3) The mediatorial intercession of Jesus
 - 7) The second coming of Jesus Christ in glory and in victory
 - (1) Manifests Jesus Christ in all His glory to the world
 - (2) Manifests Jesus' power and authority, as Lord of all
2. The Eschatos and the Salvation of God's People
 - 1) The Eschatos is the culmination of the covenant promise of God to save His people
 - 2) The Eschatos is the final phase of salvation:
 - (1) Final and full transformation of human redemptive existence and the transformation of the bodies of the Believers (Philippians 3:21)
 - (2) The full manifestation of the glory of God in heaven with His people: eternal holiness, eternal joy, and eternal love (Revelation 21:1-4; 22:3-5)
 3. The Eschatos and the Final Defeat of Evil and Death
 - 1) The application of Jesus' victory over the devil and death will be applied in the Eschatos
 - 2) Satan will be bound and cast into the Lake of Fire
 - 3) Death will be no more
 4. The Eschatos and the Re-Constitution of the Creation
 - 1) Creation will be purged with fire
 - 2) Creation will experience its redemption (Romans 8:18-23)
 - 3) Creation will be reconstituted to reflect God's holy nature and will

Final Thoughts for Tonight's Class and Course

1. Presuppositions are Determinative in a Worldview: The belief system of an individual or a society reflects both basic presuppositions in life that determine how we make sense of life and how we interpret everything that matters, including values, truth, the nature of right and wrong, and how we face and cope with the future.
2. Sinful Nature is Determinative in a Worldview: The sinful nature in humans is so pervasive and determinative that unless we look to the Lord, His Bible, and yield ourselves humbly to Him, then we are absolutely going to go astray on the biggest issues of life.
3. Worldview Beliefs Determine Everything: Our core worldview beliefs serve to make sense and give structured understanding for everything else; thus, to have these beliefs to be right is imperative.

4. Our View of God and Ultimate Issues Determine Everything: Concerning how people think about the future and the choices we make regarding the future, if we do not rightly understand the sovereignty of God and our accountability to Him, and if we do not acknowledge His truth in the Bible and yield ourselves to His will and way, then by default we will attempt to solve problems by our own sinful and limited perspective, which will inevitably lead us to make false assumptions and erroneous choices in an attempt to solve problems. This will only lead to suffering, chaos, and destruction.
5. Warning to Stubborn Refusal of God: If a nation, including our own today, refuses to yield to God's truth and sovereignty, then we will suffer great consequences in our society and our culture. Everything is on the line. May the Lord bring us back to Himself that we may repent and return to Him.
6. Returning to the Lord: Repenting and returning to the Lord means that we admit that God created us, God is the only sovereign God of the universe, we are accountable to Him, we are under His judgment because of sin, He has spoken through His Word to bring us understanding of how we can be saved through His saving work in Christ, and we turn from our sins and yield ourselves unreservedly to Him. Without this return, we are doomed.