

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Series: Healing | Reference: Acts 19:11-22 | Title: Secular World View? | Date: 01.27.18 |
| Website Writeup: | | | |
| How does our World View affect how we see God & his interaction in our lives? What is the difference in a Biblical World View as compared to an Individualistic Western World View? | | | |

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Acts 19:11-22, *God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.*

Show [The Moon Walking Bear](#)

Show the image old woman/young woman - once you see it, you can't stop seeing it.

Have you ever noticed, when you go to buy a car you start to notice the car you're interested in everywhere? When I went to buy my Civic, suddenly there were Civic's everywhere, I hadn't noticed before how many people drove them until I started wanting one. Interesting, isn't it, how our powers of perception work.

C.S. Lewis once said, "This is the first thing to get clear in talking about miracles. Whatever experiences we may have, we shall not regard them as miraculous if we already hold a philosophy which excludes the supernatural."

In other words, even if we see miracles, we don't regard them as miracles if our world view doesn't accommodate for miracles. It's useless to try & convince anyone miracles happen who refuses to believe they happen.

Ken Blue tells a story of a woman who'd been suffering from epileptic seizures & migraine headaches for 20 years. The doctors had treated her with drugs for these 20 years which seemed not to do much for her headaches & only moderately controlled the seizures. She came to Ken & his wife to be prayed for. Two separate times they prayed for her without any effect. The third time she came, they prayed & she felt a 'shift' in her body, and the headache went away immediately. She felt the shift was evidence of an unclean spirit leaving her body. She went to the doctors & was tested the following week to monitor her brain activity. It showed no disturbance, they rescheduled another since they thought there was a fault in the machine, the second came up negative. They dropped her dosage until in a few weeks she was drug free & she has been headache & seizure free since. These very competent & conscientious doctors came to the conclusion they'd been wrong in their diagnosis for 20 years, although tests had shown otherwise. They risked a malpractice suit rather than admit it could be divine healing.

So, how many people passed the ball? Did we see anything else? Old Woman or Young Woman? Wanna buy a Civic? Do we look at life with faithful expectation to see God

work? Here's a challenge, count this week how many red BMW's you see. I'll bet you'll start to see them everywhere. Maybe if our world view included God, we'd see his miraculous work everywhere.

I have the book, *1001 Quotes, Illustrations & Humorous Stories for Preachers, Teachers & Writers*. It's full of pithy little Christian short stories & quotes to pepper a sermon with, all listed under various headings. If you need a quote on money, calling, humanity, the Bible, or marriage, for example, you just turn to that heading & look one up. I was curious, what would this book have on healing? I thumbed through the pages to the 'H' headings; hatred, heart, heaven, no healing. I then turned to the 'M's' for miracles; mercy, ministry, misfortune, no miracles. I then turned to 'S' for supernatural; stewardship, stress, then tactfulness, I was in the 'T's'; no supernatural.

We moderns don't have room for thinking about the miraculous. We function mostly without reference to God, oriented almost exclusively to the Secular World View (or an individualistic western world view). We all have a world view, yet we would be very hard-pressed to define that view. Without realizing it, we naturally believe our world view is the right way to view reality. It wouldn't occur to us to think of looking at reality in a different way, or that there could even be a different way. That's why you have culture shock in a foreign culture. It's not just a new language & dirty bathrooms, it's the way people think & view reality differently than you which sets your mind spinning. Why do they do it that way? Why did they say it that way? Why did they ask me that question? We end up angry & depressed in culture shock & label all the people around us as 'backwards' or 'stupid', since we don't understand they come at reality differently.

I remember sitting in a Muslim home in Lampung one day with all the Muslim men smoking clove cigarettes. One of their friends had died of cancer a while back & they were discussing it. I chimed in with my neat clean Western World View, thinking I'd teach them something. I said, "Well, maybe if he hadn't smoked all those years he'd not have died of cancer?" The response was an overwhelming, "NO! Our choices have nothing to do with it! God will take us when he takes us!" I'd come up against an almost purely Deterministic Theological World View. Everything in their mind was controlled by God, or unseen spiritual forces.

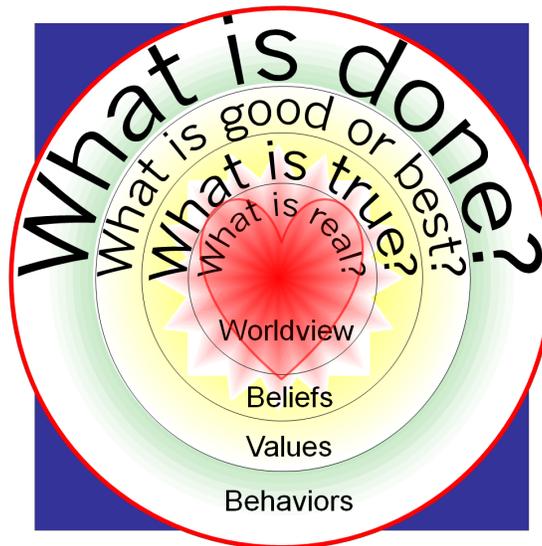
At night in the village, all windows are closed no matter how hot it is, or how much smoke fills the room, since the spirits can get in & harm family members. No one swims near a water fall without first throwing stones into the falls to scare off the evil spirits. At the beach in Pelabuhan Ratu you do not, if you value your life, where a green bathing suit when swimming in the ocean because the sea goddess/spirit likes green & will drown you. If you're sick, need a spouse, or want a child, you go to the Dukun, the witch doctor. Your missionary friend goes to the hospital & gets you medicine which you promptly sell to buy food because your sickness, in your mind, is caused by a neighbor who's put a curse on you; it isn't a medical issue. People who've come to Christ from a Muslim background are more effective evangelists in their own cultures, since their world view fits the context into which they speak. In some ways, yet not all, they carry

over into their Christianity, a more Biblical World View. It at least starts from a theistic perspective; the idea that God & the spiritual realm is real, alive & active all around us.

Not true for us. In our world view the world is a *Mechanistic Closed System*. Secularism denies anything spiritual & all our reality is viewed only through the lens of cause & effect of natural law. Although we talk of God in churches, we believe David Hume when he says: *'A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature...a firm & unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.'*

World Views are born into, not formulated cognitively. You are immersed in it by culture from birth, and they go largely unnoticed & unquestioned. For instance, the first thing a Muslim child hears when they are born is their father whispering *The Shahada* in their ear, *'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet.'* Born into a Theistic World View. For the Western Christian though, we're not. As a result, there comes that internal struggle when we read about Paul & others healing people in Scripture, and due to our world view, we postulate all that had stopped with the Apostles. Why? Because we're not looking for the red BMW, or Moon Walking Bear in the video. We're not looking for the miraculous, so in our minds, it doesn't happen.

So, What's a World View? (Kwast's WV Model)



At the center of each one of us our WV tells us what is real. Leading to what is true; our beliefs. Leading to what is good or best; our values. Leading to what is done; our behavior. You could add another circle which answers the question, what is obtained/ accumulated? Our artifacts. (George Carlin - "Gotta get more stuff!")

This is hugely useful to understand for many reasons. Habitual sin for instance, why can't I change my behavior? Well, maybe my world view doesn't really hold to the reality

of God? Maybe I'm going at this backwards? For instance, Islam works only on the outside circle of behavior - act in certain religious ways & you reflect God. In Islam it never matters where your heart is - you can be hateful as the day is long in your heart but as long as you outwardly practice the 5 Pillars of Islam, it's all good. Some Christians do the same; don't do this, don't do that & you're a good Christian. Moralistic Christianity, a works based righteousness. But that never works, it merely produces a facade, anger, depression & a secret sin life - there's no heart transformation.

Jesus works from the inside out. He seats himself on the throne of our inner life & changes us from the core of our being. It's by His grace & righteousness, not our works we are changed. He changes our view of reality. So, who am I in Christ? Today, I'm seated with Christ in the heavenly realms as his brother & co-heir, his beloved & all the power & resources of God's kingdom are available to me, not someday, but right now. As a result our beliefs, values, behavior & artifacts all change solidly over time as we are spiritually formed into His likeness.

If I'm a person holding to a Secular/Individualistic World View, then my core is convinced only by what I can prove scientifically. God isn't a part of it & it's survival of the fittest - the individual's the most important thing, I'm at the center. So, I believe only that which I can see, taste & touch, and value only that which benefits me. I become skeptical & don't indulge in religious fanciful things, I work hard to get ahead for myself, I undermine & overtake others for my own benefit. And, in my artifacts, I collect things which make me feel secure, safe, or which expand my influence; insurance, safe cars, prestigious belongings, etc. The self is the ultimate reality. I believe the individual is all important & value that which feeds the self - I build only myself. The result...we have McMansions where everyone has their own space, their own privacy, cars & other such things, which express our individuality & special interest groups dominate our political system, so on & so forth.

Yet, even the strict secularist, modernist, existentialist, humanist is cultic. They need, want & desire purpose & connection they can't prove & don't fully understand, but intuitively feel. They aren't buying cars & looking at porn just for scientific utilitarianism. They consume these things because they need something emotionally & spiritually - the God shaped hole in all of our lives. But they're stuck in a system of thought which doesn't accommodate spiritual answers.

When I was in Asia, I found individuality is looked on with skepticism. Dressing the same as everyone else is normal - uniforms in the workplace & schools are the norm - individuality isn't valued. Insurance was a struggling business, not only because of economics, but it wasn't seen as needed in their deterministic theistic world view; they were fatalistic, everything's in God's hands.

But...How would a Biblical World View look, where does this secular WV come from?

Well from many places, but we can pinpoint some thinkers. Rene' Descartes, born in the 16th century. A French philosopher, mathematician & man of science, concluded that

everything was open to doubt except conscious experience & existence. The father of modern philosophy, he's the guy who said, "*I think, therefore I am,*" and was one of the people who started this ball rolling. He believed in God, but for him, God was only a starting point & from that point Descartes built a system of understanding reality through what can be mathematically proved through cause & effect. Later philosophers found no reason to include God in the equation at all; the door had been opened to exclude God & humanity walked right through it.

Blaise Pascal said, "I cannot forgive Descartes; in all his philosophy, Descartes did his best to dispense with God. But Descartes could not avoid prodding God to set the world in motion with a snap of his lordly fingers; after that, he had no more use for God."

Was Descartes an evil man? No. Did his thinking help set in motion the exclusion of God in the modern western world view? Yes. But, we all know it's not just his fault. And some of this thinking has benefited us greatly. Before the 1600's there was basically a Theistic World View which ruled societies. The Church controlled the world it seemed. People were forcibly 'made Christian'. Church & State, synonymous. Kings chosen by & subject to the Pope. Christianity had become largely practiced from the behavioral level, instead of understanding the enthroned Christ changing the heart from the WV level. The Scientific Revolution, Reformation & Enlightenment have brought us some great freedoms & helped faith to break free from that wrong power & control. Luther & others helped us to understand that it's 'by grace we're saved, through faith, not by works so that no one can boast'. They returned us to the more Biblical view of reality, that it's Christ work in us alone which saves & changes a person. So, we can't advocate going back to the Dark Ages. Backwards is never the way to go.

Men like Hegel, a German Philosopher, pushed this process forward with Hegelian Dialectic; thesis, antithesis, synthesis. A system used to prove things in the world. Though his work was also not the only influence on our modern world view. Yet, he contributed to the idea that everything had to be provable, and one result was areas of study became separated. Now education isn't necessarily holistic, seeing everything as originating from a Creator & somehow linked together, but we specialize in more narrow areas of study. Yet, interestingly philosophers & physicists are now looking for the Unified Theory of Quantum Physics. One theory which will unify all the workings of nature – the theory of everything, as if we're coming full circle. *It's described in this quote.*

*"An intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes."*¹

¹ Essai philosophique sur les probabilités, Introduction. 1814

Sounds like God, but God's just no longer a part of the equation. That 'Intellect' at this point would probably be regarded as a computer large enough to crunch the numbers into which we'd try & feed information via the internet - Artificial Intelligence.

So, all the world & anything true has been reduced to anything which can be proved scientifically. The world has been made an autonomous machine which can be broken down, put back together & controlled. Instead of God, science has become our Provider, Savior & Fix-it Man. We may be theists in behavior, but inwardly we're secularists through & through. Truth is now synonymous with what can be scientifically proven. Yet, all this is failing the Post-Modern...and we're seeing shifts in our thinking once again. Science doesn't fully cut it, never will & people intuitively feel it.

So, how does that effect our prayers? Well, prayer isn't our first choice & when it's done, it many times is done with little confidence or assurance. And, like Mr. Lewis said, when a miracle does occur, it's not recognized as such. Now we have modern biblical scholars who look for the 'Historical Jesus', and in doing so, they extract the miraculous or healing texts & regard them as fanciful exaggerations of simpleminded, unenlightened people. But the battle isn't between science & faith, or the medical community & faith healers. The two are *not* mutually exclusive. Doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists & such, have great value in the Church & should be consulted & utilized as we seek God in healing. The fight is between a Biblical World View VS a Secular World View. We need to remember 1 Corinthians 4:20 which says, "*the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*"

An American pastor, John White, went on a preaching tour of southeast Asia & preached the Gospel & prayed for the sick. People were healed. However, as soon as he hit Australia, who share our secular world view, healing abruptly stopped. Interesting, maybe Aussies don't faithfully expect God to work in their reality? Or, maybe they just couldn't see it? Yet, Peter Wagner, and other Missiologists, assure us healings happen where World View accommodates it, and as a result there is; (1) Validation of the Message, (2) Evangelism is Effective, and (3) Church Growth is Exponential.

Sounds a little like Acts 19, doesn't it? Last week we said God isn't limited by our faith, and He's not, but like many things in life we live in a tension of mystery in this. For some reason it seems He might limit himself to our response in certain contexts. It's the nature of relationship. We know it's never about earning favor or manipulation of God, but He wants us to be in active relationship as well. We can't figure it all out, we can only be responsible with what we know, and have been given. We're simply to press farther into Christ for the sake of His glory in the world, being obedient to his calling.

We go back to Paul when he said in Romans 12:2 to "*...not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" Most of us read that verse & come at it with a moralistic eye. What it means to us is, don't look at pornography, don't listen to bad music, don't do this or that - start from the outer circle & work in. But the deeper issue is, how we view reality, are we Theistic through & through? Does Christ rule us at the heart level, with freedom to change us from the

inside out? Not just in church on Sunday in an outward behavioral display of religiosity. But, do we look for the red BMW, or the Moon Walking Bear in the video? Do we see God in all of life, and as active in it? Is God's reality of His Word enthroned as our reality at the core of our beings? Do I see His Kingdom everywhere I look?

They say if you stare at the 4 small dots in the center of this picture for 30 seconds, that when you look away to a white wall you will see the image of Jesus clearly. Wouldn't that be nice? Seeing Jesus all day long, in every conversation, every turn of life...

We need to suspend our skepticism & act in faith. In Matthew 16:1-4 the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven; proof Jesus was who he claimed to be. Jesus refused. Yet, comparatively, we find Peter's confession of faith in vv15-16, ¹⁵"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

His confession is followed by the transfiguration in 17:1-7 - a sign from heaven, proof of who Jesus was to Peter. The Pharisees, skepticism followed by nothing vs Peter, honest faith followed by the miraculous. Sometimes signs aren't given to angry skeptics, but to the childlike faithful who act on God's Word?

So, let's renew our minds; go home this week & look for the red BMW & when you see one, remember 1 Corinthians 4:20, "*The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*" Go home this week in faithful childlike expectation of what God will do in & through us! Matthew 18:3 Jesus says, "*I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*" That does not mean throwing out our intelligence. Rather, it means trusting in a God who heals & delivers, who loves his world, his people & is interactive in it. We become childlike in our reliance, not childish in our intelligence or behavior.