



God's World, Our Responsibility

In the Beginning God...

Adult Bible Study Hour, January 8, 2012 - Mark Bickel

Isaiah 40:21-26

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?
He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.
He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.
Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Psalms 24:1-2

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

4 Questions:

- 1. Who Do We Serve?**
- 2. How do We know God exists?**
- 3. Who is God and How Do We Know Him?**
- 4. Why does it matter if it is God's world or not?**

1) Who Do We Serve?

Being a Good Steward

Knowing the Master You Serve

2) How Do I Know God Exists?

Assault on God

- **In the Past month ...**

- **The “Old Atheists”**
 - Until a few hundred years ago there were no atheists!
 - 19th century – what Mohler calls “the 4 horsemen of the modern apocalypse”
 - **Friedrich Nietzsche** – Philosophy - God is Dead
 - **Sigmund Freud** – Psychology - Concepts of God all in the mind
 - **Karl Marx** – Politics - Religion is the opiate of the masses
 - **Charles Darwin** – Science – Origin of Species in Natural Selection
 - *They changed the game from a world where God was assumed and seen everywhere to one where the very existence of God could be questioned and where whole areas of life and study could be untaken without God*

- **The “New Atheists”**
 - Today – what Mohler calls “the 4 horsemen of the new atheist apocalypse”
 - **Richard Dawkins** – Oxford – “The Selfish Gene”, “The God Delusion” – also “Viruses of the Mind”, “A Devil’s Chaplain”, and the kids book mentioned before
 - **Daniel Dennett** – Tufts – “Darwin’s Dangerous Idea”, “Breaking the Spell: Religion as Natural Phenomenon”
 - **Sam Harris** – “The End of Faith”, “Letters to a Christian Nation” (US should be embarrassed because it is not more secular!)
 - **Christopher Hitchens** – “God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything”
 - **Mohler gives 8 summary statements about the new Atheists:**
 1. *Marked by unprecedented boldness*
 2. *Clear and specific rejection of the Christian God of the Bible*
 3. *Explicitly reject Jesus Christ*
 4. *Grounded in Scientific Argument*
 5. *Refusal to tolerate moderate or liberal forms of belief*
 6. *Attack on toleration*
 7. *Question right of parents to inculcate belief in their children*
 8. *Argue that religion itself must be eliminated in order to preserve human freedom*
 - *Seeking to change the game again, from OK to question God’s existence to insist God does not exist and the need to eradicate the concept of God*

- **Example:** Recent Discovery Channel show called “**Curiosity**” – premier week question “**Did God Create the Universe?**” – by Stephen Hawking

Defense of God

- **Classic “Theistic Proofs”**
 - **Ontological Argument** – Philosophical argument for the concept of God
 - **Cosmological Argument** – There must be some reason the universe came into existence, and there must be something before the universe that brought it into existence
 - **Teleological Argument** – Complexity of universe shows creator (2nd law of thermodynamics would say if left alone a system will move from complex to simple, not the reverse)
 - **Moral Argument** – All people believe in right and wrong, must be outside moral source
 - **Pascal’s Wager** – Better to believe in God and be wrong, than not believe and be wrong
- **Lewis’s “Arguments” for God** (see C.S. Lewis’s “Miracles”)
 - First shows we live in a supernatural world
 - Then shows that the only form of supernatural that makes sense is single God
 - Then shows that one God is the God of the Bible
 - Then goes on for remainder of book to talk about miracle
- **McDowell’s “Evidence” of God** (see Josh McDowell’s “Evidence That Demand a Verdict”)
 - Archeological, Historic, Scientific evidences for the Bible, God, Jesus, Resurrection ...
- **Keller’s “Clues” to God’s Existence** (see Timothy Keller’s “The Reason for God”)
 - **The Mysterious Bang** - why would there be something rather than nothing? Always a Cause
 - **The Cosmic Welcome Mat** – conditions for universe, life, earth, man
 - **The Regularity of Nature** – scientific theory based on ordered, consistent universe
 - **The Clue of Beauty** – music, nature, art ... longing for joy, love, beauty beyond what we can experience in this life– feel like more than naturalistic impulses of the brain! (ex. Romance)
 - **The Clue-Killer ... as Clue** – Naturalist argues these are all imaginings of mind for some evolutionary advantage (new atheists argue it was an advantage some time in the past, now a disadvantage). BUT if all our thoughts, feeling, understanding of the world simple conditioned response needed for survival and not to be trusted ... isn’t the theory of evolution by definition in the same boat, and thus equally as suspect as religion ... and at least as equally likely to be true or false as God?
 - **Morality** – We all know there is Good and Evil, and we all want good to be blessed and evil to be punished ...

Recommended Reading

“Atheism Remix” by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

“The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism” by Timothy Keller

“Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs” by C. S. Lewis

“Evidence That Demands a Verdict” by Josh McDowell

In The Beginning God – Genesis 1:1-2

*1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
3 And God said...*

All Men Know There Is a God! - Romans 1:18-20

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

All Men Suppress That Truth - Romans 1:21-25

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

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- See also **John 3:19-20 ; Psalm14:1, 53:1**

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

*28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God
32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

Some Implications of Romans 1

- **Do you believe all creation reveals God?**
 - Don't be ashamed or embarrassed to talk about God – and in truth / absolute terms
 - Point out to people where you see God in creation ... cultivate a lifestyle of not just seeing God but talking as if He is there {**example:** Drexel sociology student – “I Believe God is...”}
- **Do you believe people already know there is a God?**
 - You can speak with them boldly, knowing somewhere it will ring true (they may not acknowledge that, but Romans says they know it's true)
 - You can also ask the type of questions, tap into things in their life that will help them see their need for God
 - The various proofs and evidence and clues can be helpful in a conversation, but in the end they are not what will win the person over – take them to nature and to scripture and unapologetically show them the true God!
- **Do you believe their foolish hearts are darkened?**
 - Then don't be discouraged if they reject the truth – they have been doing that all their lives!
 - Don't assume you can change them ... only God can do that ...
 - So be encouraged, even if they show no outward signs God may be working in their heart!

How do you approach / get to know the true God yourself

- Does creation, people, your life lead you to glorify?
- Does it lead you to love and serve God?

Ultimate Application for each person - Worship our Creator!

Video: “Creation Calls – Are You Listening”

(downloaded from TheBranch.org, also available on YouTube)

Music by Brian Doerksen, video from “Planet Earth” DVD used with permission of the BBC

2) Who is the True God?



The Blind Men and the Elephant

Poem by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

Based on a popular fable from India

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It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

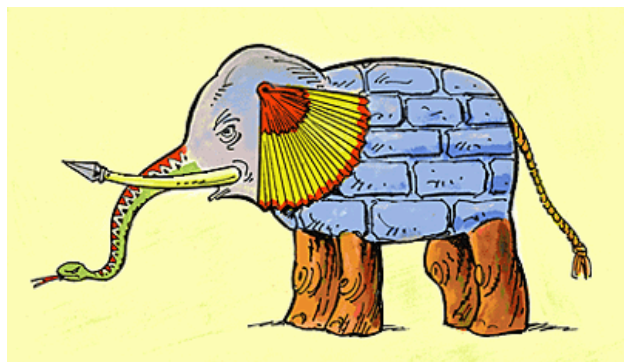
The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Moral:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!



“Is there Truth?” or “Do all paths lead to God?”

A. Example: Moral of “The Blind Men and The Elephant”

- a. Claim from “moral” in story
- b. Add 7th Blindman
- c. Elephant speak
- d. Elephant actually on the move

B. Bible

- a. Bible claims **there is a God** ... and so any claim to there being no God is FALSE

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- b. Bible makes the claim **God speaks to us**, and that **He speaks in the Bible** ... so claims he is silent, or that Bible is manmade, or any claim to God that contradicts Bible are FALSE

II Timothy 3:26

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

- c. The God of Bible says he is **Only God**, and **Jesus says he is only way to God** ... and **all other gods are worthless** ... so if Bible is true, all other paths to God are excluded ... and if Bible not true it is then not a path to God ... thus in either case “all paths lead to God” is False

I Timothy 2:5-6

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Psalms 96:4-5

*For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.*

- d. God has said we need to **proclaim him to others...** and that **he will judge all ...** so claims it does not matter to me, or that it I have no right to tell you what to believe are FALSE

Psalm 96:1-3, 6-10

*Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

*Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.
Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.
Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.*

Who is God & How do You Know Him?

BFC Articles of Faith – Article 3, God the Father

There is but one living and true God, immanent, transcendent, infinite in being and perfection, pure spirit, invisible, immutable, eternal, almighty, all wise, most holy, most free, most loving, most gracious, most merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin. He will by no means clear the guilty.

Recommended Reading

"Knowing God" by J.I. Packer

"Desiring God" by John Piper

"Experiencing God" by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King

"The Heart of Passion" DVD by Louie Giglio

3) Why does it matter if there is a God?

A. Example: Sociology / Scientific Claims:

B. Example: Three Pots

- a. *3 vases on bench ...*
- b. *Broken vase ...*
- c. *Conclusions*
- d. *Further Thought*

C. Bible

a. **Potter and Clay**

Isaiah 45:9-12

*“Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker,
to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherd on the ground.
Does the clay say to the potter,
‘What are you making?’
Does your work say,
‘He has no hands’?
Woe to him who says to his father,
‘What have you begotten?’
or to his mother,
‘What have you brought to birth?’
“This is what the LORD says—
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come,
do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
It is I who made the earth
and created mankind upon it.*

Isaiah 64:8-9

*Yet, O LORD, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look upon us, we pray,
for we are all your people.*

Romans 9:19-25

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? As he says in Hosea:

*"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people;
and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"*

b. God created ... for a purpose ... and still interacts today

Genesis 2 (selected) (notice everything the LORD does!)

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ... no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth ... for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth... the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the LORD God had planted a garden ... he put the man he had formed. ... the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow ...

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them..

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Throughout the rest of the Bible God is constantly talking to man, either blessing and coming to his aid or coming against men ...

c. Those claims effect everything ...

Conclusion: Implications for Good Stewardship ...

- **All of the World is God's**

- **The World is Not Mine!**

- **God has appointed us Vice-Regents, to rule the world on His behalf**
 - **Vice-Regents ...**

 - **Creation Mandate - Genesis 1:26-28**
 - ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
 - ²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
 - ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

 - **Great Commission - Matthew 28:18-20**
 - ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

 - **We have a task ...**

- **There is a day of reckoning ... and Reward**

- **Stewardship in this life**

Join us for the next 4 weeks:

We will be looking at: Time, Money, Creation, and Life

For Further Study:

Who Do We Serve? What Makes a Good Steward?

Biblical Passages: Jesus' Parables on Servants

- Mathew 18:21-35
- Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18
- Matthew 24:36-41; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:35-48
- Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27
- Luke 16:1-13
- Luke 17:7-10
- John 13:12-20; John 15:18-25
- John 15:12-17

Is There a God?

Biblical Passages:

- Genesis 1
- Romans 1

Good Books:

- "Atheism Remix" by R. Albert Mohler Jr.
- "The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism" by Timothy Keller
- "Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs" by C. S. Lewis
- "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell

Who Is God?

Biblical Passages:

- Exodus 34:6-7
- Psalm 24
- Isaiah 40
- Colossians 1

Good Books:

- "Knowing God" by J.I. Packer
- "Desiring God" by John Piper
- "Experiencing God" by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King
- "The Heart of Passion" DVD by Louie Giglio

Why Does It Matter?

Biblical Passages:

- Creation Mandate - Genesis 1:26-28
- Great Commission - Matthew 28:18-20

Good Books:

- "All of Life Redeemed" by Frey, Ingram, McWhertor and Romanowski

Audio recordings, teaching notes, handouts, etc. from this series can be found at:

Gracebfc.org (click the image for "God's World, Our Responsibility" or go to "Teaching Archives")