

“The Eyes of the LORD”: The Biblical Worldview



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Prov. 15:3; Job 12:7–10; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 20:5, 6; John 1:1–14; Mark 12:29–31.*

Memory Text: “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (*Proverbs 15:3, NKJV*).

Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote a poem that began with his writing about imaginary animals: talking rabbits, talking squirrels, and the like. They “have as much in common with real animals,” he wrote, “as our notions of the world have with the real world.” Then, to end the poem, he wrote: “Think of this, and tremble.”

“Tremble” might be too harsh a word, but it is true that indeed, so much of what humans think about the world could be completely wrong. For example, for almost two thousand years many of the world’s smartest and best-educated people thought the earth sat immobile in the center of the universe. Today, many of the smartest and best-educated people think that humans evolved from what was originally a simple life-form.

As human beings, we never look at the world from a neutral position. We see it, always and only, through filters that impact how we interpret and understand the world around us. That filter is called a worldview, and it’s so crucial that we teach our young people, and even older church members, the biblical worldview.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 24.

“The Eyes of the LORD”

An Oxford university professor has theorized that we, the world, and everything around us—none of it is real. Instead, we are the digital creations of a race of aliens with super-powerful computers.

While that’s an interesting theory, it does bring up a crucial question: What is the nature of reality?

There are two very broad possible answers, even if only one is rational. The first is that the universe—and all that is in it, including us—just *is*. Nothing created it, nothing formed it. It just is here. It is simply a brute fact. There is no God, there are no gods, there is nothing divine. Reality is purely material, purely natural. As someone said 2,500 years ago (this is not a new idea), there is only “atoms and the void.”

The other view is that some divine being (or beings) created the universe. That, indeed, seems more logical, more rational, more sensible, than the idea that the universe just *is*, with no explanation for it. This position encompasses the natural world, the world of “atoms and the void,” but it is not limited to it. It points to a reality that is much broader, deeper, and more multifaceted than the atheistic-materialist view so often heard today.

What do the following texts have to say about the ideas raised in today’s lesson? *Ps. 53:1, Prov. 15:3, John 3:16, Isa. 45:21, Luke 1:26–35.*

Central to any Christian education is the reality, not just of God but of the kind of God that He is, a personal God who loves us and who interacts with us. He is a God of miracles who, though using natural laws, is not bound by those laws and who can transcend those laws when He wills (such as in the virgin conception of Jesus). The teaching of this view is especially pertinent in our day because so much of the intellectual world, claiming (erroneously) that science supports it, openly and unapologetically teaches the atheistic and naturalistic worldview.

Think about how narrow and limited the atheistic worldview is in contrast to the biblical worldview, which (as said above) encompasses the natural world but isn’t limited by it. Why, in the end, is the biblical worldview, the theistic worldview, simply so much more logical and rational than its atheistic rival?

Leibniz’s Question

Many years ago, a German thinker and writer named Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz asked what is probably the most basic and foundational question possible: “Why is there something instead of nothing?”

How do the following texts answer Leibniz’s question? *Gen. 1:1; John 1:1–4; Exod. 20:8–11; Rev. 14:6, 7; Job 12:7–10.*

It’s fascinating how in the Bible the existence of God is just assumed. Genesis 1:1 doesn’t start out with a bunch of logical arguments (though many exist) for the existence of God. It just assumes His existence (*see also Exod. 3:13, 14*), and from that starting point, God as Creator, the Bible, and all the truth revealed in its pages unfold.

The doctrine of Creation also is foundational to any Christian education. Everything we believe as Christians, everything, rests on the doctrine of the six-day Creation. The Bible didn’t begin with a statement about atonement, or about the law, or about the Cross, or about the Resurrection, or about the Second Coming.

No, it began with a statement about God as Creator, because none of these other teachings makes any sense apart from the reality of God as our Creator.

Hence, again, a biblical worldview must emphasize the importance of the doctrine of Creation. This emphasis, too, becomes very important, because the teaching has faced a full-frontal assault in the name of science. Evolution—billions of years of life slowly evolving by fits and starts, all by chance—has all but destroyed faith in the Bible for untold millions. It’s hard to imagine a teaching more antithetical to the Bible and to the Christian faith in general than evolution. That’s why the idea that evolution can somehow be made to harmonize with the biblical doctrine of Creation is even worse than atheistic evolution. It can’t be done, not without making a mockery of the Bible and of the Christian faith as a whole.

God asks us to spend one-seventh of our lives, every week, to remember the six-day Creation, something He asks for no other teaching. What should that tell us about how foundational and important this doctrine is to a Christian worldview?

The Biblical Worldview

As said in the introduction, none of us views the world from a neutral position. For example, an atheist looks at a rainbow in the sky and sees nothing but a natural phenomenon. It has no meaning other than that which humans decide to give it. In contrast, someone eyeing it from a biblical worldview sees not only the natural phenomenon, the water and light interacting, but also a reaffirmation of God's promise not to destroy the world again by water (*Gen. 9:13–16*). "How great the condescension of God and His compassion for His erring creatures in thus placing the beautiful rainbow in the clouds as a token of His covenant with men. . . . It was God's purpose that as the children of after generations should ask the meaning of the glorious arch which spans the heavens, their parents should repeat the story of the Flood, and tell them that the Most High had bended the bow and placed it in the clouds as an assurance that the waters should never again overflow the earth." —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 106.

For Seventh-day Adventists, the Bible remains the foundational text of our faith. It teaches the worldview, the "filter," by which we are to see and understand the world, which can be a very daunting and complicated place. Scripture creates the template to help us better understand the reality we find ourselves in, which we are part of, and are often confused and befuddled by.

What truths are found in the following texts that can better help us understand the reality we exist in? *Eph. 6:12; Mark 13:7; Rom. 5:8; 8:28; Eccles. 9:5; Rev. 20:5, 6.*

As Seventh-day Adventists, we must firmly adhere to the teachings of the Bible, for this is God's revealed truth to humans, explaining for us many things about the world that we would otherwise not know or understand. Hence, all Christian education must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God, and any teaching contrary to it must be rejected.

What are some teachings of the Bible that contradict other beliefs that people hold? What should this difference teach us about how important it is that we adhere faithfully to the Word of God?

Worship the Redeemer

As crucial as the doctrine of Creation is to our faith, the doctrine does not appear alone, especially in the New Testament. It often comes coupled with, even inextricably tied to, the doctrine of Redemption. And that's because, frankly, in a fallen world of sin and death, Creation alone isn't enough. We live, we struggle, we suffer (as we all do), and then—what? We die, ultimately winding up no different from animal carcasses left on the side of the road.

How great is that?

Hence, we have, as crucial to our worldview, the doctrine of Redemption, as well—and that means we have Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected at the center of all that we believe.

Read John 1:1–14. What are these texts telling us about who Jesus was and what He has done for us?

Look also at the first angel's message: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water' " (*Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV*). Notice that the "everlasting gospel" is linked directly to God as the Creator. And when we realize that the God who created us is the same God who, in human flesh, bore the punishment for our sin upon Himself—it is no wonder we are called to worship Him. What other response should there be from us when we realize what our God is really like?

For this reason, Christ and Him crucified must remain front and center to all that we teach—a teaching that, in fact, must include the Second Coming, as well, because Christ's first coming doesn't really do us a whole lot of good apart from the second, does it? One could argue, from Scripture, that Christ's first and second comings are two parts of one event—the plan of salvation.

Dwell more on the idea, expressed in John 1, that the One who made all "that was made" (*John 1:3*) was the One who died on the cross for us. Why should worship be the overwhelming natural response?

The Law of God

Years ago, in France, the nation was debating the question of capital punishment: Should it be abolished? Advocates for its abolishment contacted a famous French writer and philosopher named Michel Foucault and asked him to pen an editorial on their behalf. What he did, however, was advocate, not for abolishing just the death penalty—but for abolishing the whole prison system entirely and letting all the prisoners go free.

Why? Because for Michel Foucault all systems of morality were merely human constructs, human ideas put in place by those in power in order to control the masses. Hence, these moral codes had no real legitimacy.

However extreme his position, what we see here is a logical consequence of a problem that is not really so new. Moses dealt with it in ancient Israel thousands of years ago. “You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes” (*Deut. 12:8, NKJV; see also Judg. 17:6, Prov. 12:15*).

However, if we shouldn’t do what is right in merely our own eyes—that is, we ourselves are not righteous, holy, and objective enough to know what is morally correct—then how do we know what to do? The answer, or course, is that the Lord who created us also gave us a moral code to live by. Maybe our eyes can’t get it right, but the Lord’s always do.

What do these texts teach us about moral conduct? *Deut. 6:5, Mark 12:29–31, Rev. 14:12.*

If we are going to make redemption central to our Christian worldview, then (as we saw last week) God’s law, the Ten Commandments, must be central, as well. After all, what are we redeemed from if not sin, which is breaking the law (*Rom. 3:20*)? The gospel really makes no sense apart from the law of God, which is one reason we know that the law is still binding for us, despite its inability to save us. (That’s why we need the gospel.)

Therefore, all Seventh-day Adventist education must emphasize what Ellen White has called “the perpetuity of the law” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 63), which includes the Sabbath. If education is to help restore the image of God in us as far as possible in this life, then even at the most basic level God’s law must be held up, in light of Christ’s example, as the moral code that shows us what truly is right in God’s eyes.

Further Thought: “The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595. With this idea in mind, we can see why a solid Christian worldview is essential for Adventist education. After all, as we noted earlier, education in and of itself is not necessarily good. People can be educated, even highly educated, in ideas and attitudes that are contradictory to the principles found in the Bible. That’s why, as Seventh-day Adventists, our educational system must be based on the Christian worldview. This means, then, that all general fields of education, science, history, morality, culture, and so forth will be taught from that perspective—as opposed to one that contradicts or even just ignores it. Also, as said earlier but worth repeating: there’s no such thing as a neutral perspective; all of life, all of reality, is viewed through the filters of one’s worldview, whether or not that worldview is cogently and systematically thought out. Hence, it is essential that the biblical worldview form the foundation of all Seventh-day Adventist education.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** What are examples that you can think of from history in which entire systems of education were (or even are) very destructive? What were some of those places, what were students taught there, and what can we learn from them? How can we protect our own educational systems from these destructive influences?
- 2** This week’s lesson looked at some of the key points of a Christian worldview: the existence of God, the Creation, the Bible, the plan of Redemption, and the law of God. What other important elements should be included in any complete formulation of a Christian worldview?
- 3** An eighteenth-century thinker once wrote: “O conscience! Conscience! Thou divine instinct, thou certain guide of an ignorant and confined, though intelligent and free being—thou infallible judge of good and evil, who makes man to resemble the Deity.” What’s right, or wrong, with that position?
- 4** Look at this Ellen G. White statement again: “The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.” What does that mean? How does this show us why Adventist education must be so different from much of how the world itself views education?

Missionary's Darkest Night

By MERRY GRACE BALORIA

I never thought that a single night would be the darkest in my life. It was during that darkest night that God showed me His marvelous light.

Heavy rain awakened me at 12:45 A.M. It was completely dark in the one-bedroom house that I shared with a missionary partner in Eastern Samar province. Only two weeks remained of our one-year term with 1000 Missionary Movement, and a big earthquake had left the area without power.

I couldn't see anything, but I heard strange noises. Grabbing a flashlight, I directed it toward the door. I couldn't see anyone, but I felt certain that an intruder had entered. Shaking with fear, I knelt under the large mosquito net that covered my partner's bed and mine. "Lord, please save us just like you saved Daniel and Joseph," I prayed. "We wouldn't be here if it weren't for You."

I lay back on my bed and, trembling, repeated Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (*NKJV*). I picked up the flashlight again. What I saw was beyond my imagination. It was horrible. I saw a man with red eyes and wet hair. He held a large bolo knife and was kneeling inside our mosquito net.

Terrified, I screamed at the top of my lungs. My partner awoke, and we shouted for help. The intruder lunged at us with the sharp, single-edged knife, and we tried to kick him away. Suddenly something hard hit me. I fell to the ground, pain sweeping over my body. *Lord, am I going to die?* I thought.

Hearing someone trying to open the house door, I cried, "Open the window!" When my partner and I heard the window being opened, we ran to it and leaped out. A neighbor saw my battered face and asked what had happened. When she heard about the attacker, she rushed home, fearful for her own children.

My partner and I walked barefoot in wet, deserted streets, calling for help. Everyone seemed to be asleep. Finally, someone took us to the hospital at 3:00 A.M. My partner had slight cuts on a hand and foot. I had a serious cut from my left eye to my jaw. A physician gave me many stitches and injections.

The happiest moment in that dark night came with the morning sun. As the sun rose, it seemed to be shining just for me. I smiled. I felt Jesus' deep love. He had been with me from the beginning and would be with me until the end, the Shepherd watching over His sheep. The attacker was caught that morning,

and he remains in prison. I was not discouraged. Eight months later, at the age of 22, I began a second year of service with 1000 Missionary Movement, this time in South Korea. I now am in my third year of service. I thank God for the experience. The Lord said in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (*NKJV*). My outlook on life has changed. My life isn't mine; it is God's.



Part I: Overview

We can't spend all day analyzing or testing whether every single belief we hold is true or not. We have jobs, families, and responsibilities that usually preclude full-time philosophizing. At one point in our reflective lives, we settle on a core number of principles that we hold as true. These principles are broad in scope and usually touch on issues of origins, meaning, morality, and destiny. Together, these will form our worldview. This worldview then becomes a lens through which we see the world and process, incorporate, or test new information as it comes to us.

This lesson focuses on the necessity of teaching a biblical worldview. It contrasts this necessity with a naturalistic/materialistic worldview (i.e., that nothing supernatural exists, and everything [with a capital "E"] can be explained and be reduced to physics and chemistry). In contrast, central to the biblical worldview is not only the proposition that God exists but also that He is a personal God who engages with His creation. His creative power explains the material universe, including us. His redemptive power reveals His heart, displays His restorative purposes for the universe and humanity, and secures our futures. Worldviews that stray from the biblical witness (e.g., naturalistic evolutionary theory) can easily undermine human value. We can see this truth clearly in the grim examples that follow.

Part II: Commentary

Illustration

Worldview is one of those words rumored to be of vast importance. But since we seem to go through our days just fine without explicit reliance on it, there is a temptation to believe its importance is overrated. It's true; taking a stroll with a friend, arguing over this or that, rarely provokes occasion to speak of the first principles of logic or of competing ethical paradigms. But allow that stroll to take you down the *Blutstraße* (blood road) to the Buchenwald Memorial in Germany, and then worldviews take on a chilling significance. Buchenwald, along with other concentration camps during World War II, were part of the Nazi extermination machinery dedicated to killing Jews, political dissidents, Gypsies, and other "undesirables." Listen to Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor himself, explain the origins of this nightmare:

"If we present a man with a concept of man which is not true, we may

well corrupt him. . . . I became acquainted with the last stage of that corruption in my second concentration camp, Auschwitz. The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazi liked to say, of ‘Blood and Soil.’ I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some Ministry [department] or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.”—Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. xxvii.

This is why worldviews matter. They can shape a reality in which light becomes darkness, and darkness light, where evil is good, and good is evil (*Isa. 5:20*). It is intellectually naïve and narrow-minded to explain atrocities simply by calling the perpetrators “monsters” or some other dehumanizing epithet without getting to the core of why people do what they do. Many “monsters” of history showed love to their wives and children, cracked jokes with friends, bounced their giggling grandchildren on their knees, and proceeded to get up each morning to perform the day’s atrocities. This is why worldviews matter. And this is why the answer to the psalmist’s question, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (*Ps. 8:4*) must always begin with “in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (*Gen. 1:27*).

Is there any religion or philosophical system that places a premium on human life higher than Christianity’s proposition that humans are the created, beloved image bearers of the one divine God? This truth entails the belief that Christians, Seventh-day Adventists included, are in a sense the protectors of the worth and dignity of humankind and should be flanking competing worldviews, marshalling a high view of what it means to be a human.

Some may think it a delusion of grandeur to assume that the dignity of humanity needs to be defended in the modern twenty-first century. But (post) secularism has a difficult time grounding objective human value (or “objective” anything, for that matter). In a now-famous debate between Christian apologist Greg Bahnsen and atheist Gordon Stein, someone asked from the floor why “Hitler’s Germany” was wrong. Stein, representing the atheist position, could come up with no better answer than to say that what Hitler did went against Western civilization’s moral “consensus.” Basically, it was wrong because Western civilization had previously decided that behaviors of that nature (for example, genocide) were wrong. Within this moral worldview, if the decision had gone the opposite direction for some reason, then all that was done by the Nazis could just have easily been deemed moral. Remember, Gordon Stein is not some Nazi propagandist in the 1930s. He is a *Jewish-American*

scholar having a debate at the University of California, Irvine, USA, in the year 1985.

Notice that neither Stein nor the Nazis subscribe to a worldview that upholds the intrinsic worth of humankind. Stein's framework of majority-determined morality has as much effectiveness at restraining evil as a paper tiger. Eventually, the person, or persons, who subscribes to this moral worldview will logically conclude that there is no *objective moral obligation* to go along with the majority and will simply do "whatever is right in his own eyes" (see *Prov. 21:2, Deut. 12:8, Judg. 21:25*). The fact that wicked regimes or individuals come and go is to be expected; what is disconcerting is that the core worldviews that shaped them can still be heard "at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers."

Worldviews and Law

Most people would agree that they subscribe to worldviews that encourage some form of law-keeping. However, if their concept of law-keeping is primarily influenced by the legal codes of their countries, there may be a crucial difference between a Judeo/Christian understanding of law and other formulas.

Dr. Joel Hoffman brings out a rarely mentioned difference between the Ten Commandments and other legal codes. He offers an illustration of a conniving teenager who reflects on securing his financial future by marrying a wealthy older woman, killing her, and facing seven to twelve years of prison. He weighs the consequences; he would get out of prison at about thirty years old but would be wealthy for the rest of his life. He decides it's worth it. Hoffman then says that there is nothing in the entire body of American law that says you are not entitled to make that calculus. Nowhere does American law state that if you are willing to do the time, you still shouldn't do the crime.

This is where the Ten Commandments stand out in contrast, precisely because they don't state specific consequences for disobedience. They are *moral* law, not *legal* law. Of course, later these commandments also make up the legal code of the nation of Israel. But the commandments tell us what to do and what not to do, not in order to avoid certain specific consequences but because God is communicating what is morally right and what is morally wrong, something American law (America is likely representative of other countries in this respect) doesn't do. Perhaps this also is why the Ten Commandments are not introduced as "commandments" (*mitsvot*), but instead as "words" (*d'barim*) (*Exod. 20:1*). (See Joel M. Hoffman, "Interpreting Language," n.p. [cited 22

Dec. 2018]. Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek_q0qvfbqE.)

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians who find ourselves in positions of teaching, we need to communicate the uniqueness of the law of God to the next generation. We often contextualize the Ten Commandments as a legal code to “scare” young people into obedience, but in doing so, we may divest God’s law of its unique moral authority. Any foolish tyrant can make up a law on a whim and command subservience on pain of death. Instead of motivating people to obey God’s laws by listing severe consequences, perhaps we as teachers can communicate what a privilege it is even to *know and understand* what the moral law of God (and the universe) is. And that is just the beginning. To have these moral laws and principles inscribed on our hearts and minds by the Spirit of God so that we may reflect His character is a privilege almost beyond comprehension, not to mention the tremendous and innumerable blessings that follow (*Jer. 31:35, Rom. 8:4*). Contrast this with the world’s massively confused morality and consequent pain, and one would hope that people would be lining up to learn of God’s laws and have their lives changed by them (*Isa. 60:1–3, Mic. 4:2*).

Part III: Life Application

Discuss:

- 1. What are the different worldviews today that leave an open door for evil and tyranny to gain a foothold in society? How does one explain that these worldviews can be held by individuals who are extremely kind and, as the saying goes, “wouldn’t hurt a fly”?**

- 2. Frankl provides a definition of man and the consequences of that definition: “When we present man as an automaton of reflexes, as a mind-machine, as a bundle of instincts, as a pawn of drives and reactions, as a mere product of instinct, heredity and environment, we feed the nihilism to which modern man is, in any case, prone.” In what ways does evolutionary theory support this dangerous worldview?**

