

WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS #7

“The Knowledge of Good and Evil”

I. Review

A. The Mother of All Sins

1. We are in a mighty war of worldviews.

“A worldview is the total of answers people give to the most important questions in life.”

Dr. Ronald Nash

- **How did this world come to be?** Other worldviews say it always was. The biblical worldview looks to the “most important verse in the Bible” and says “God created it”
- **What’s wrong with the world?** Various worldviews will tell you it’s the government; the environment; the unequal distribution of wealth. But in the biblical worldview, the simplest answer to the question “What is wrong with the world?” is ‘SIN’.

2. Last week we looked at “the mother of all sins”, the first sin recorded in the Bible; the desire to be God.

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:4-5 NIV

a. Verse 5 contains the “mother of all sins”....

KJV: “You shall be as gods...”

Modern Translations: “You shall be like God...”

b. The word translated is “Elohim”; the same word in Genesis 1:1, where it says, “In the beginning, GOD created the heavens and the earth.”

The “mother of all sins” is man’s desire to be as God!

To be a God unto himself.

To be independent from the authority of God.

3. Notice the temptation was to be “like God, knowing good and evil.”

4. The great temptation was to obtain the “*knowledge* of good and evil” independent from God. It was an *epistemological* temptation.

B. One of the Most Important Words You Never Heard

1. One of the most important words you never heard is “epistemology”.

a. Just 12 letters, no more than “kindergarten” or “delicatessen”

2. **Epistemology is the study of “knowledge” itself.**

a. Biology is the study of “bios”, or life

b. Psychology is the study of the “psyche”, the mind

c. Theology is the study of “Theos”, God

c. Epistemology is from the Greek term ‘episteme’, which means ‘knowledge’.

Epistemology is the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge.

Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary

3. In his book War of the Worldviews, Gary DeMar tells us...

“Epistemology is the study of the nature source and limits of human knowledge, analyzing such crucial concepts as ‘truth’, ‘belief’, and ‘knowledge’.

Gary DeMar, War of the Worldviews

2. **Epistemology seeks to answer questions like:**

- What is “knowledge”?
- How is knowledge acquired?
- What does it mean to “know” something?

4. Here’s the easiest way to remember it: “epistemology” answers the question, **“How do I know what I know?”**

5. Examples:

- In math: $2 + 2 = 4$ (How do you know? You can count it out)
- In science: Water boils at 212 degrees (How do I know? I can prove it empirically, by demonstration)

6. It is one thing to know something by simple mathematics; or by scientific demonstration: but the question in the Garden of Eden was *ethical*, HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOOD AND WHAT IS EVIL?

C. The Meaning of the 2 Trees

1. God placed man in a Garden full of trees and gave them permission to eat from all of them except one.

15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:15-17

2. Why did God forbid this one tree? Because only God has the right to define good and evil!

3. God created man to be *dependent* upon God for his knowledge of good and evil. The great mother of all sins is to seek the knowledge of good and evil *independently*; to take the place of God in the knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong.

"You shall be as gods, as Elohim, mighty gods; not only omniscient, but omnipotent too;" or, "You shall be as God himself, equal to him, rivals with him; you shall be sovereigns and no longer subjects, self-sufficient and no longer dependent."

Matthew Henry

"The object of the tempter appears to have been this: to persuade our first parents that they should, by eating of this fruit, become wise and powerful as God (for knowledge is power,) and be able to exist forever, independently of him."

Adam Clarke

4. Adam and Eve were free as long as they depended on God for their knowledge of good and evil. So...

"Their great sin was seeking the knowledge of good and evil independent of God."

Dennis Peacocke

5. How should they have handled the great temptation?

Serpent: God forbids you the tree because He knows that if you eat you will know as much as God; you will be able to define good and evil for yourself

Eve: No. We don't need to seek that knowledge independent of God. We depend on Him to tell us what is good and what is evil; what is right and what is wrong.

Serpent: But how can you know what He says is true?

Eve: Because He has revealed it to us.

6. We know what we know of good and evil by the Word of God.

II. The War of the Worldviews

A. There Are Still 2 Trees in the Garden

1. Spiritually speaking, there are still 2 trees in the Garden.
2. These 2 trees represent 2 worldviews:
 - a. The biblical worldview is the “tree of life”; we depend on God for all things, especially our knowledge of good and evil.
 - b. All other worldviews are really just one: the seeking of knowledge, especially of good and evil, *independent* of God.
3. We can’t win the culture wars until win the war of the worldviews and defeat those who have redefined good and evil independent of God.

“The serpent was convincing Eve that sin would actually enable liberation and self-actualization! The knowledge of good and evil here denotes not merely a condition of higher intelligence, but rather a state of perfect independence of God. They would then know of themselves what was good and what was evil, and would no longer need the divine direction.”
Kurt Strassner, “Opening Up Genesis”

4. This sounds like today’s newspaper!
 - a. **Liberation:** “Be free from the old taboos and all religion and its rules that limit your ability to be who you really are!”
 - b. **Self-actualization:** “Come out of the closet! You have nothing to be ashamed of! Gay is OK!”
 - c. **Perfect independence from God:** “Don’t want your baby! Get rid of it! A woman has a right to her own body!” (You do...but even science has proven that the fetus in your womb is NOT your “own” body...it has a body all its own! Did you know that if you murder a pregnant woman you will be charged with TWO COUNTS of homicide?)
5. Nothing defines a corrupt culture more than the redefinition of good and evil.

B. A Corrupt Culture Redefines Good and Evil

1. Adam and Eve came under the judgment of God when they sought to know good and evil on their own.

2. A nation that When a nation begins to turn away from God for its definitions of good and evil

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

Isaiah 5:20-21 NIV

a. We are living in a culture that is redefining good and evil!

“To redefine-to give a new or different definition to a word”

3. Do we realize how far we have fallen?

“In the days of a more Christian culture, a lone individual with a Bible could warn and judge society, regardless of the majority vote because there was an absolute by which to judge. There was an absolute for both morals and law. But to the extent that the Christian consensus is gone, this absolute is gone as a social force.”

Francis Schaeffer

4. Do we realize how much the enemy has invaded? I was reminded of the crisis of our culture when I saw a movie this week.

III. Conclusion

A. “The Darkest Hour”

It's the early days of WWII. The armies of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany have rolled across Europe, invading one country after another meeting little resistance. Hitler's Panzer tank units and troops have 300,000 British troops backed up against the sea, stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk with little hope of rescue.

As the world, including the United States, does nothing to help, all that's left between Hitler and total European domination is the little isle of England...and it's new Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

The crux of the movie is how clear a country's “darkest hour” makes the only 2 choices...surrender and submit or fight to the bitter end.

1. Tears kept coming to my eyes as I watched the bravery of Churchill, the man who stopped Hitler and may well have saved the world.

VIDEO CLIP FROM “THE DARKEST HOUR”

2. I found myself thinking about our war today...not a shooting war; a spiritual war. Not a war over land, but over the heart and soul of the nation!

B. What About You In “The Darkest Hour?”

1. Most of the movie was about the tug of war behind the scenes between the people in power. On one side were the “appeasers”; Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had no faith England could win. They wanted to sue for peace with Hitler and hope for terms of mercy that would allow England to survive. On the other side was Winston Churchill, convinced that Hitler was a madman who would stop at nothing to dominate everything. “When will the lesson be learned? You can’t reason with a tiger when your head is in its mouth!”

2. This is a perfect picture of the spiritual condition of our country today. The American church has stood silent while the enemy has crossed the borders and invaded one spiritual kingdom after another and now occupies lands that were once at peace!

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

3. And when they ask us, “How do you know?” We can answer, “Because God has revealed good and evil to us through His word!”