

Conquering the World Bible Study:

THE UNIVERSE, CREATION & CREATED THINGS

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The understanding of the term "world" has been grossly skewed in Christian thought, particularly in the Western World. God's intent for its use has moved from a range of different meanings within Christian culture to one primarily "negative" concept - of which we will uncover and dismantle. That one meaning has distorted the way we view and interact with humanity, understand creation and the universe; and how we interpret its use and meaning in the Holy Scriptures.

What if changing our view or expanding our view of this simple word could impact the trajectory of our ministries for eternity?

What if it could impact our respond to creation, sin and death and abundant life so profoundly, that our efforts to reach the lost and preach the Gospel would be amplified for the better? Would you be willing to change your perspective after full counsel is presented? In this series, we are conquering the "WORLD" by digging into the true meaning of its use in the scriptures and aligning our hearts to the heart of God and the ultimate purpose of salvation -- reconciliation. It is our prayer that you come to know how one seemingly small word - when used in proper context - can completely change how we understand God's love for us, our view salvation, our interactions with one another and the way we represent and present our faith.

SOME SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Ephesians 2, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 4, Psalm 4:3, John 17:15, 1 John 4, Romans 12, 1 Peter 2, Revelations 11:15, Revelations 18:4, 2 Corinthians 5-7, Colossians 3, Mark 2:14-17

Revelation 3:20-21, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*

Revelations 2:26, *“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations...”*

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In this Bible study, we will look at how many uses of the term WORLD in Scripture speaks directly to the universe, creation and even created things. In this session, we look at how beautiful everything God created really is and how we might relate to them. Specifically, we address this truth: Have we dismissed the significance of this aspect of the WORLD in our spirituality? If what God has created is good, then what role does this play in our faith?

I. OVERVIEW

- a. We have been talking about how the understanding of the WORLD affects our perception of the “world” that God loves. For the most part, the word “WORLD” has a negative connotation among the congregation. **In this context, it is overemphasized.** When in truth, that negative part is only a part of the equation.
 - i. So much so that it produces an “everything about the world is evil” concept.
 - ii. It drives itself on distinguishing between sacred, secular, spiritual, worldly.
 - iii. It produces a lack of respect for humanitarian efforts or the protection of the earth.
 - iv. It makes see material things as evil instead of properly weighing the concept of idolatry. We can obsess over this.
 - v. It causes us to see any pull to the “things of the world” as worldly when that is absolutely not true.
 - vi. Our failure to view the world properly, causes us to SEPARATE ourselves from things... that quite honestly are necessary to a right view of people whom God loves...
 - vii. And that separation can cause a superiority complex among believers. Somehow we grow into thinking we are better than someone because of we do not participate in or associate ourselves with “the world.”
- b. We’ve examined our perceptions and put scriptures like “love not the world” and “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” into proper view when considering that God loves the **world**.

II. UNIVERSE, CREATION & CREATED THINGS

- a. We understand that the word WORLD has several distinct meanings in scripture, all stemming from the Greek word, kosmos, and that identifying each of those meanings - -enhances the context of scripture and places it in proper perspective.
 - i. **Examining the use of the word “WORLD” in the context of the universe (cosmos) and the creation (the earth) is important to us as believers. While we do not have the time it takes to dig deeply into this, we can grasp some basics.** From this perspective, we realize that the universe and creation is good! Genesis 1 confirms this. **He even challenged us to use the creation to discern night and day, and to observe spiritual signs. We can look to the universe to grasp a broad view of God’s desire for order and alignment.** In addition, as scribes, artists and worshippers we are able to see the relationship between God’s universe and his creation – within our own lives. Adam had to make tools for the garden, tools to care for the animals.... lots of creativity going on.... much of it materialistic... and it was all GOOD.
 - 1. **Creation continues in humanity.** Look at the picture of the cities behind me. The world from this perspective has no good or evil. A

building is not bad, our stoves and refrigerators are not evil, etc. – anymore than the fish, grass, the sun or the moon.

2. **God’s command to tend and protect the earth is important.** Adam wasn’t just placed in the garden to sustain himself, but he was there to care for it.... to honor it. We talked about how even the sacrifice of animals was particular in the Old Covenant because God cared about the treatment of animals, plants, trees, etc. Just as Adam was called to care for the earth; people are still called to care for the earth today... and its animal, insect inhabitants. We are even challenged to observe animals, insects as patterns for spiritual living.
 3. **When we can respect the WORLD from this perspective, we will learn to respect and honor people may be drawn to these interests and endeavors in the heavens and in the earth.** Shouldn’t we be a people who care? Is God only concerned with Spiritual things in light of this? Can we find a balance in our understanding here?
 4. **Our perspective of the term WORLD changes when we move out of a narrow, religious focus.** When we can see THE GOOD of God in the midst of everything, I believe our theology shifts. The universe and the earth sustains our lives, livelihood... and is an intricate part of the universe God created. We rely on the sun for the changing of seasons and for sustaining our habitation. We need gravity. We need water, plants and animals – our very lives depend on its protection.
- ii. Take a look at these passages with the proper meaning of the use of the word WORLD identified:
1. **Matthew 25:34**, “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (UNIVERSE)...’”
 2. **Luke 11:49-50**, “Therefore the wisdom of God also said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute, “that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world (UNIVERSE) may be required of this generation...”
 3. **Matthew 16:26**, What profits a man to gain the whole world (MATERIAL/TEMPORAL THINGS) and lose his soul...”
 4. **John 1:10 ...** “The world (EARTH) was made through him...”

III. YOUR PERSPECTIVES

- a. Have you ever considered the universe, creation and created things as an important part of your faith?

- b. In your experiences as a believer, what have you been taught concerning creation? Honestly, how have you viewed those who have interests in this area like preserving the earth, protecting animals, etc.? Do you have some assumptions in this area that have now changed?

- c. How have you viewed PEOPLE or situations within the world that focus on the universe, creation or created things as points of study, causes, etc.? Can you see how God might use these things in the earth to bless us – science, medicine, technology, agriculture, etc.?
