

A World That Isn't Real

We inhabit a world of fantasy. It's a world of make-believe. It's a world that we've made up out of our imagination, and we pretend that it's reality. But it isn't reality. Only the world that exists in the Bible is the true reality. This may sound goofy, but it isn't. Let's discuss this.

More than a hundred years ago, Franz Kafka wrote a novel, "The Trial," that was called "existential" (for lack of better term). It was made into a movie that was equally bizarre, surreal, incomprehensible. In retrospect, what was "surreal" about it was how real it was. Kafka had extraordinary insight and prescience in the madness enveloping his world. We are living today in an even stranger time, when almost everyone ignores the values and the worldview of the Bible in favor of the "normal" world that we know and experience. But this world we experience is so saturated with lies and deceptions and with presuppositions that are false that what results is a grossly distorted, deranged understanding of things. Worse, we who live in this dark world imbibe its values and beliefs, lies all, without thinking.

The Bible is the Word of the living God. The Bible is truth, regardless what people today think or say to the contrary. **"I am the way, the truth and the life,"** Jesus said. So truth is a Person, the most real Person who exists. He is the living Word. In all these ways, Scripture is truth and anything in our world today that contradicts it is therefore false, deceptive or an outright lie.

There are so many lies today that we are overwhelmed and unable to test reality. Who produces these lies is veiled, but newspapers, TV programs and the internet spread these lies widely, as do modern classrooms, government and corporate agencies. Here are some (not in any order):

There's no such thing as "free will" because everything in nature is due to cause/effect relationships involving matter, and our behavior therefore is (and must be) physically determined. Girls can become boys and boys can become girls if they want to, and advances in medicine facilitates that. Earth is a living organism and she is carrying way too many burdensome humans, causing her great distress. The experts among our intellectuals can and must be trusted to properly order society. God doesn't exist or, if so, "God" is simply a term for something like a force that we can't know until science discovers it. Truths are whatever we want them to be, but to the extent that there are real truths (if there are), Science discovers them. Democracy is the best form of government and we have it here in our nation. The internet is a powerful tool to enhance communication and sociability. Education and knowledge are the key to our future. Wars are sometimes necessary. Politics pursues good social policies. The earth revolves around the sun and has been doing that for billions of years. Many races of mankind exist. There's no such thing as sin, only disordered thinking. When we die, we cease to exist, so the goal in life must be to extract as much happiness as possible during the time we have. Revenge is necessary to maintain justice when legal systems are inadequate. Humanity's greatest value is the freedom to express oneself and to pursue life and thought as one pleases. Forgiveness of others who harm us in some way is only for those with weak personalities. Secularism, even if must be enforced, is essential to maintain harmony in a pluralistic society. We are entirely material beings; our mind is nothing more than the operation of billions of interconnected neurons. We're not responsible for how we live except to the system of laws that we've created that are themselves merely necessary (and perhaps arbitrary) social constructs. Western civilization, the highest man has ever achieved, deserves to be exported to all the people of the world. Sexuality is a personal matter and has no moral significance except what we imagine from superstitious traditions; likewise marriage is an (unnecessary) social construct. Prosperity is to enable us to be entertained, enjoy comforts, buy lots of things and be at ease. Society knows what evil and injustice are and has the responsibility to punish those who fail to conform to what it determines to be right. Individualism must yield to a more natural and just corporate or communal view of humanity.

There's much more. There's foolish and deceptive thinking even within the church. But let's see what Scripture holds for us because we can only recognize a counterfeit or a lie if we know what the true situation is. And Scripture understands that God's values and worldview are totally at odds with ours. Here are a few verses from Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthian church, in Chapters 1 and 2: **"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." "The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom." God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are . . . Christ Jesus . . . has become for us**

wisdom from God.” “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” What Paul is saying is clear. People who are unsaved think foolishly and invent lies because they reject the truths God has revealed in Scripture. Those who are saved, in contrast, to the extent they yield to the Spirit, can know God’s revealed wisdom. God’s wisdom is truth. Once again, man’s thoughts, because he rejects the truths of God, are folly, and that explains the Kafkaesque world we inhabit. Foolishness. Unreal.

We need to pursue this further. Here are some statements Jesus said: **“The first shall be last and the last first.” “Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” “Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather it is what comes out of a man makes him unclean.” “, Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” “Whoever is not against us is for us.” “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”** God’s ways are not our ways! God’s ways comprise a different reality, a true reality.

One of the reasons that Jesus came was to dispel the darkness that blankets our world. We are responsible to God for His ways, His values, and His worldview, not ours, not the lies and deceptions of our world. Paul’s, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” commands us to withdraw from the foolishness of worldly thoughts and ideas, lies all, and make instead the thoughts of Scripture—that is, God’s thoughts—our thoughts. “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world” means we’re to fill our mind with the truths of Scripture, which alone glorify God; because if we allow the foolishness and lies of the world to shape our minds, we’re at enmity with a truthful God.

If we’re followers of Jesus, we’ve been called to inhabit the world of Scripture. Some of us (I can almost hear their voices) will claim knowing the Bible and theology isn’t necessary to know what’s wrong in the world. Nonsense! The “world” has been strategically designed and finely tuned to fool the cleverest and most pious among us. Brilliant theologians in the Church now believe in billions of years and Darwinian evolution. The prodigious achievements of late in engineering and technology have made the world’s lies not only credible but compelling. We must, MUST, saturate our minds with God’s authoritative word and reflect deeply on it with the intent to apply it to the situation of life today. Otherwise, we’ll necessarily be forever in the grip of worldliness and be an offense to a holy God.

Someone else will say, “I’m saved. I have forgiveness of sins and the assurance of being in heaven. That’s all I need. Your counsel here is good but unnecessary. And anyway I already lead a pretty decent life.” Wrong! Paul and of the other authors of Scripture were writing TO YOU, who believe in Jesus. We believers are responsible to God for our thoughts, our motives, and our values, as well as our character and what we do with the time that’s been granted to us. It’s a heavy responsibility, one that matches our privileges as a child of God. Jesus was raised and exalted so that He could send the Holy Spirit to empower us to live the life of the Word of God, if we want to. But we have to want to. Not to understand this is exactly what this lesson is all about, viz., not thinking God’s thoughts but the thoughts of the world, which are cleverly formed lies and deceptions.

Power is made perfect in weakness. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Knowledge puffs up. You are not your own . . . He who was a free man when called is slave to Christ. Be wronged! Deny yourself and take up a cross and follow Me. Such statements as these are the wisdom and will of God for us. These are just some of the truths that comprise the new realm we’re to live in. It’s a totally different reality than the world we experience. We must deliberately and intentionally flee the thick darkness of a lying, deceitful world and instead dwell in the light of Christ’s Word. It’s the reason that we’re saved!!!

Salvation is being in a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. It’s being united to Him in love and trust. We should therefore want more than anything to know and to live out His beautiful life and to think His thoughts, to the glory of God.