

Biblical Themes Relevant Today

There's so much incoherence and absurdity in our modern world that I thought it might be helpful to discuss a few of today's issues with reference to Scripture.

Seculars in today's Western world idolize Science. This modern idolatry began in the early 1500's in Northern Europe, when certain intellectuals got the idea that it shouldn't be the Scriptures that explain or interpret nature. Instead, *they* should, using special, esoteric knowledge about the cosmos that they, and no one else, had. There was, they believed, a "secret language" hidden in nature that they could learn to decode. People devoted to a careful study of nature could explain its workings and even, it was assumed, be able to manipulate if not master nature. They engaged in this to gain a new sense of power over nature. Only experts in the field, of course, could carry out this work. If this sounds like Gnosticism, or something from the devil, that's because it probably is. At first, astrologers and alchemists dabbled in this idolatry, but in time it all became more refined (especially with the development of engineering), and so accepted by the intellectuals of our world. The fraudulent teaching that science (and science alone) explains existence is now so prevalent in our culture that it passes as truth even by those who deny the existence of any truth. So science now supposedly proves that God doesn't exist. Darwinism, the philosophy of naturalism (materialism), Marxism, and more, derive from this dark birthing of Science. Paul correctly understood that intellectuals, for all their supposed wisdom, cannot grasp anything spiritual. God won't allow it. But wait! Aren't we grateful for anesthesia, and for refrigeration, and for antibiotics? Yes indeed! The world is complex, and we need to be humble. It's God's creation, so we must trust Him for matters not revealed in Scripture.

In previous eras, those who had wealth flouted their superiority by amassing luxurious things, things difficult to buy or to obtain, or things that were so wasteful only those truly affluent could afford it. But today we have so much prosperity that even people of more modest status can have luxuries and can afford wasteful things. So the elites need other ways to broadcast their special status. They do it now by holding luxury *beliefs*. They indulge in ideas and values and opinions that confer special status. Thus they (as well as the intelligentsia) use vocabulary no ordinary person ever would use, such as "heteronormative," or "cisgender," or "intersectionality." They believe the climate is changing, that all whites are racist, that wealthy nations should have open borders, that we shouldn't have so much freedom or use so much electricity, that drug use is good, that being a victim of oppression is virtuous, and lots more such nonsense. Our super-wealthy and super-intelligent elites show off their exalted status by such absurd beliefs – beliefs that in reality are harmful to the rest of society. But they don't care. The wealthy live in a different America than the rest of Americans and, worse, they have contempt for ordinary people. Such people live in a fantasy world, in a bubble of self-indulgence and cynicism. Let's understand something critically important: Anyone who supposes that wealth can be used righteously is self-deceived. Wealth *cannot* be used compassionately because of the controlling noetic effect of sin. Luke especially, of the four Gospel writers, warned the church of the dangers of wealth. Wealth is exceedingly dangerous to one's soul. It's almost as if wealth is a God-sent judgment. The best attitude toward wealth for any believer is this: Give it away! And do it generously.

Freud was a fraud. A colossal fraud. His bizarre ideas that generated the arcane specialty of classical psychoanalysis have been debunked. But that isn't his legacy. What Freud gave Western civilization is the now fully accepted and believed notion that "religion" (i.e., Christianity) is what primitive, superstitious people believed; today's civilized people must – *must* – be secular if not atheistic to be modern. He arrogantly alleged that there's no such thing as moral certainty (while insisting that his own moral ideas were a certainty!). The pinnacle of human evolutionary advancement is atheism and amorality. To believe in God, he further claimed, was a mental illness. All educated people and wannabe intellectuals today believe this! Freud saw himself as a Conquistador, conquering all society with his ideas and, as if empowered by Satan, that's what has happened. Scripture has one word for Freud and his modern followers: fool. We reside in a culture and society that's stuffed with deceptions and lies and that's led by fools. Elections won't and can't change this. People *want* to be deceived because they hate God, so deceptions fill that need. Let's face it, we're a nation ripe for judgment. Not reform.

We live in a time when the chief characteristic of our society is irresponsibility. The lack of responsibility is everywhere on full display, from our government leaders to our youth. Is it necessary to give examples? Here are a few: porn-viewing; abortion (to deal with non-marital sex); video-gaming; obsession with social media; drug abuse; refusal to work; passion for sports and politics; refusal to be educated and be productive; and so much more. Sadly, it's heavy in the church as well: The refusal to reach out to others with the Gospel and abandoning to government the care of the needy poor and disadvantaged, for example. We don't normally acknowledge that responsibility is one of God's attributes, but I suggest that it's one of His most sublime. He is responsible for everything and everyone in His creation, for their care, for their just and ultimate destiny, for the restraint of evil in this sin-saturated world, for the fulfillment of His promises, for controlling

the flow of history, and more. As we're the image of God, having been given responsibilities at the very beginning, we too should be exceedingly responsible creatures. Are we even aware how serious this issue is? I suspect not.

Israel's leaders have been quoted as saying, "If you hurt us, we'll hurt you back worse." That's the rationale they offer for their war against Hamas. In other words, retaliation. Is retaliation biblical? Almost everyone in the Western world also says, "The people of Israel have the right to defend themselves." Is that biblical? The issue is exceedingly complex, and I don't feel competent to render judgments. But we can at least try to think analytically about what Israel is doing. So I offer the following: (1) Biblically, Israel isn't even reprising the Book of Judges. They are in Exile still, awaiting the Return of their Messiah/King, whom they despised and rejected. Exile is a period of discipline, which means suffering, imposed by God for faithlessness; and they are faithless still. They have no biblical right to the Land unless they are repentant and in God's will. Yet, (2) Israel *must* be in the Land for Christ to return to them there. So Jerusalem is still trodden down by the Gentiles; and although they have State-hood, they aren't really autonomous (they need other countries to support them politically). Their situation today is similar to when Exilic Jews returned under Ezra and Nehemiah to re-populate the Land so that Christ could come to them. (3) Although they claim they're at war with Hamas, in reality what they're doing is a police action. They are holding accountable murderers and putting them to death, as Genesis 9 requires. That command was given before Israel or any nation came into existence, so they are certainly not committing genocide, as too many falsely claim. (4) We don't retaliate against those who harm us. We trust God to deal with those who seek to harm us, in His way and His time. That's a clear biblical principle. But the commands to forgive others, to turn the other cheek, and to love our enemies are for individuals to obey. Scripture is silent regarding the use of force to defend innocents. The application of the biblical ideal is difficult when others need to be defended. (5) God is clearly at work in the world, and especially in the Middle East, preparing the nations for end-time events to occur. This Israeli action should be understood to fit somehow in God's sovereign rule of the affairs of nations. (6) Those comprising the street mobs shouting for "justice" for the Palestinians, to end Israel's attempt to extirpate Hamas, for the annihilation of Israel, are really declaring themselves to be God-haters. May God have mercy on them! (But I don't think He will.)

Globalism! In today's evangelical world, "globalism" is something to sneer at. It represents a movement that aims to make certain ultra-wealthy elites even wealthier and ever more powerful politically, while reducing everyone else to serfdom. We live however in an exceedingly complex world, and a simplistic understanding is probably only thoughtless groupthink, fostered by websites. The complexity of our world is beyond anyone's comprehension, beyond any conceivable description. Worse, it's a sin-laden world saturated with lies and deceptions and idolatrous movements. Yet it's a world supervised and controlled by a good God, who is carrying out great purposes. So, yes, there's a sinister side to globalism. It's the attempt to rebuild the Tower of Babel for the entire world, to create one vast, world-wide empire embodying the (wicked) characteristics of the Daniel 2 statue and to wipe earth clean of all God's testimony. In God's providence, it won't be realized. But let's also understand that globalism has lifted over two billion people all over the world out of ghastly poverty. In the past 30 or so years, prosperity has come to the "third world." People *everywhere* now enjoy jobs with incomes and a raised standard of living, thanks to globalism's complicated network of supply-chains. Evangelicals should be rejoicing over this. We should leave the politics of the pagan Gentiles to the pagan Gentiles—and to God—and instead stay centered on fulfilling what Christ has clearly and explicitly commanded us in His Word to be doing, calling out people and preparing them for the Kingdom. We can do that in loving trust and humility, if we want to.

The (now ex-) President of Harvard University referred to her opinion on a certain matter as "my truth." That use of "truth" is common on today's campuses and in the fantasy world of elites: A personal view or idea or value or opinion is treasured as "my truth." Do we even know what "truth" means? Apparently not. Truth as what conforms to reality doesn't exist anymore in the fluffy world of intellectuals, so they feel free to refer to anything they delight in as "truth." My concern is that Christians in America today take the truths of Scripture so lightly that they might as well also simply be personal opinions. Biblical truths come from God. On hearing from an angel that his wife will have a son, Zacharias replied, "How can that be, I'm an old man!" And the angel replied with a sharp rebuke, "Hey! Don't you know who I am? I am Gabriel! I am bringing to you a truth directly from God, so don't question it" (Luke 1:18-19). And for not responding with humility to truth from God, he was disciplined. God's words are truth, which means they have authority that *demand*s a submissive response. Not questions nor indifference. Truth must control our life, or it isn't really truth. If we say we that believe God's Word is truth but we don't conform our lives to it, we're lying. And worse, we're calling God a liar because we don't really acknowledge His words as truth. Authority means we're under obligation, with accountability, like it or not. That's heavy.

God's Word is eternal. And the issues in our world today are real. We honor God by attempting to evaluate issues on the basis of biblical principles. Our conclusions of course need to be tentative. Let's not be indifferent to God, nor ignore Him, even in matters that relate to our times and the world we inhabit.