

Worldviews in Conflict - Part 1

12 March 2017

*"And they devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers". Acts 2:42*

We have spent a few Sundays looking at this portion of scripture and today I want to focus on the **devotion to the apostles teaching**.

At that time Christianity was brand new and new believers were being added all the time. There must have been a lot of vagueness and uncertainty as to what exactly this new movement of Christ followers entailed. It was therefore vital to establish the foundational beliefs, doctrine, theology, values and so on that are uniquely Christian. The new believers were from a variety of backgrounds and religious systems. Many of them were Jewish and were steeped in the legalistic framework of Judaism. Others were maybe steeped in various philosophies, pagan religions and cultish practices. So we

can see that the apostles had an enormous task of building a new belief system into the hearts and lives of these new converts to Christianity. You can imagine how many erroneous and deep rooted beliefs had to be dealt with and overcome in this process.

The beauty is that they did not have to do it alone because they had the Holy Spirit who now resides in the lives of every Christ follower. The Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us, as Jesus said in John 14:25-26

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you", and in **John 16:13** *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come".*

This was an encouragement firstly to the apostles that they didn't have to invent a system of beliefs, of doctrine, of theology etc

because the teachings of Jesus and the guiding and teaching of the Holy Spirit would give them everything they needed to teach this new group of Christ followers.

Not only was this an encouragement to the apostles who were initially tasked with teaching the believers, but it also was an encouragement to all the believers who now had the Holy Spirit living within them. And it is an encouragement to all believers for all time because the apostles teaching continues through believers into the future until Christ comes again.

We are in a much more fortunate position in this regard because in addition to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we have the Word of God, Old and New Testament, as our rule of faith which the early church did not have. They only had the Old Testament. The New Testament however was being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at that time. The body of belief into which all of Christianity was to be rooted and established for all time was being formed then, and this body of belief is what the

apostles were teaching. It is exactly the same body of belief that we need to be rooted and established in today. This body of belief is distinctly different from all other bodies of belief found around about us in the world today. Another word for a "body of belief" is a "worldview". We are surrounded by and bombarded by many conflicting worldviews on the internet, in movies and books, training courses and motivational speakers and much more in this modern world of connectedness and easy access to any information we want.

The problem is that there is so much bombarding us daily that it has become extremely difficult to distinguish what is good from what is bad; what is right from what is wrong; what is truth from what is error. All sorts of worldviews are being massaged into our subconscious and we are being seduced and manipulated by all the entertainment and all the philosophies of the world system to the point that it swallows us and controls us. Therefore the apostles teaching becomes even more critical and relevant to us as

modern day Christ followers. We must know what we believe in order not to be deceived, seduced and controlled by the prevailing systems of this world - we must be rooted and established in a biblical Christian worldview.

Let me quickly define what is meant by a worldview: Chuck Colson in his book "How now shall we live" defines it as "the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the big picture that directs our daily decisions and actions". It really is a theory of the world used for living in the world, so it is a mental model of reality.

As we all know our beliefs drive our behaviour. So our worldview is a body of belief that will drive the way we behave in the world - it is a framework of principles and values through which we interpret the world. Our responses to all of life are informed by our worldview. Our choices are shaped by our worldview - it is our decision-making filter. That is why it is so important to ensure that we have the right worldview. So over the

years Gordon and I have been attempting to preach and teach in such a way as to play our part in establishing a biblical Christian worldview in our own midst.

The modern Christian church has by and large failed in its mandate to present Christianity as a life system or worldview that governs every area of existence. The tendency has been to view Christianity as just another worldview among many - just another alternative that is embraced individually and privately. This then has caused Christianity to become largely ineffective in having a redemptive impact on our surrounding culture.

The truth is that regardless of any other worldview God spoke everything into being out of nothing (just read Gen 1 and John 1:1-14). Everything that exists came into being at his command and is therefore subject to Him and finds its purpose and meaning in Him. That means that no matter what we are engaged in, are looking at,

thinking about, being impacted by - the truth of it is found only in relationship to God and His revelation. Turn to Col 1:16-17 *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together"*.

Then Jesus says in John 14:6 *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"*. He is the source of everything, the Alpha and the Omega (beginning and end), nothing exists apart from Him, and nothing has meaning apart from Him. He is the author of creation and Lord over all creation.

Chuck Colson says "In every area of life, genuine knowledge means discerning the laws and ordinances by which God has structured creation, and then allowing those laws to shape the way we should live".

In other words the only worldview that has legitimacy and authoritative validity is the Christian biblical worldview. All other worldviews are in conflict with it.

Only Christianity offers credible answers to all of life's most crucial questions and only Christianity provides a legitimate and effective strategy for how we are to live in the real world.

Of course our Christian worldview is based solidly on God's revelation in scripture.

Scripture is intended to be the basis for all of life - it is the framework through which we view and comprehend all of reality.

Understanding Christianity as a total life system, as **the one** worldview, is absolutely essential for two reasons: First, it enables us to make sense of the world we live in and it provides us with a rational framework for living. Second, it enables us to identify and understand worldviews that are opposed to our faith, and it equips us to better reach the lost and also to defend Christian truth as God's instruments for transforming the culture in which we live.

So our calling is not only to live our own lives according to a biblical Christian worldview but also to engage the world around about us and to change culture we are a part of. We

are to fulfil both the Great Commission and the cultural commission. This means we are to preach the Good News and play our part in bringing all things into submission to God's order. This we should do by defending and living out God's truth in the unique historical and cultural conditions of our age. Leonard Sweet says that we are not simply called to make a difference in the world but rather to make the world different.

But if we are to successfully do this it will require that we understand the worldviews and systems that compete for people's hearts and minds.

The real war is for the hearts and minds of people. It is not geographical or race boundaries that divide us, but rather we are divided by our deeply held beliefs or worldviews.

This has really only been an introduction into understanding why it is so important to be devoted to the apostles teaching.

Part 2 will begin looking at what our Christian worldview is and then contrast that with some of the conflicting worldviews that are contending for the hearts and minds of people - even Christians.