



## **Controversy Worldview Insights and Contributions to Philosophy Made by Bible Writers was and Others**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper seeks to give a coherent outline of the biblical worldview. The basic questions that underlie the formation of such a worldview are examined in the areas of ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

The historical-grammatical approach to biblical understanding was adopted. Questions on ontology, epistemology, and axiology were explored by examining Bible writer records. Four major historical periods, from around 1500 BCE to 100 CE, were examined. The concepts highlighted were compared with corrective statements made by Christ on views expressed in His day.

Moses and other prophets spoke with a singular voice regarding a controversy worldview between good and evil, which also is mirrored by New Testament writers. They corporately also identified the principal elements of philosophy underpinning this theme that should guide Christians in the areas of reality, knowing, and acting. There is a striking commonality of information across the four historical periods examined, but we do not assert that believers at the time necessarily held views identical to those held today. Anciently, philosophers, scholars and leaders studied and admired other belief and worship systems. This led to disastrous consequences on account of syncretism. Christ corrected the principal misunderstandings for hearers of His day.

Our Lord spoke against many worldview perversions. The instruction comes to us, through these examples, to make sola Scriptura its own interpreter, to reverence God's revelations through His prophets, and to seek to understand God's beautiful character as the guide to our worship and ethical behavior. Further research might be conducted on the origin of changes seen in today's major Christian churches that are exerting a contrary impact..

**Keywords:** Controversy Worldview, Philosophy, Apocalyptic Writers, Reality, Ethics, Epistemology, Axiology

### **INTRODUCTION**

How we view the universe, our concept of reality, will determine how we approach life's challenges, our day to day interaction with others, our aspirations and how we plan to fulfil them. A worldview will help individuals grapple not only with social and cultural issues, but seeks to answer questions about God, human existence, creation, the existence of evil,

purpose, truth, moral responsibility, destiny, eternity, and other matters (Naugle, n.d.). In fact, worldview will shape the culture adopted by Christian groups and will also yield a distinctive philosophy (Wolters, 1983, pp. 14-25). Worldview provides the content of Christian belief while philosophy indicates the essential shape the content will take. It investigates the validity, character and inner logic of Christian faith (Brown 1968, p. 287).

The rebellion recorded as occurring at Babel indicates that the pattern of belief and worship accepted by Noah and his immediate family was no longer practiced in its fullness (Gen. 11:6, 7). A variant worldview had been expressed, just as had happened before the Flood. Following the confusion of languages, ethnic groups with even more distinctive habits and practices emerged. The Egyptians represented one of these groups who had a deep religious worldview that provided for many gods, which were acknowledged by all classes of society (Trigger, Kemp, O'Connor, & Lloyd, 2001, p. 196). Certainly, in the time of the Israelites, numerous worldviews existed. Unfortunately, the Israelites did not always resist the attraction of these pagan worship practices (e.g., 1Kings 11:17; 18 to 19:18; Judg. 16:23-30). More deities were worshipped by other people groups in contact with the Israelites. And the multiplication of gods and ideologies did not stop then.

A ferment of philosophical thought was particularly evident around the time that Daniel the prophet wrote. Lao Tzu, Confucius (China), Gautama (India), Pythagoras (Greece), and Zoroaster (Iran) are credited with inventing and/or promulgated new ideas. Today Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism live together in China and are important to the national identity. In other countries Buddhism or Islam are dominant and help define the national character. Zoroastrianism still has adherents in the East. This philosophy had some influence on Mithraism that, in its Roman form, exerted an impressive influence throughout sections of Christianity. This is seen especially in the sanctity given to Sunday. Anciently, Mithra, the rising sun, had Sunday kept in his honour (Arendzen, 1911; Merkelbach, 2019).

While various elements of these worldviews were influencing human societies in distant locations, there were influences closer to the centres of early Christian thought that were also exerting their influence. Philo Judaeus (c.15 BCE–c.50 CE), the Greek speaking Jewish philosopher in Alexandria, was promoting his brand of philosophy, which had decidedly Platonic overtones. He reconciled Jewish theology to Platonic theory. He represented the Creator (Logos) as the one next to God, but dependent on him (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018a). Another individual influenced by diverse thought, and who possibly studied under Philo, was the Egyptian Cerinthus. He distinguished Jesus from the Christ indicating that

Christ descended upon Jesus at baptism and departed at His crucifixion. The Apostle John contended with this doctrine (1 John 2:18, 19; 4:3). Others such as the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6, 15) and Simon Magnus (Acts 8:9-13) influenced the early Christian church negatively (Arendzen, 1908; Schaff, 1910, 2:461–466). These beliefs were to exert impacts on the Christian church, leading away the weak, but later developments were to have more far reaching effects.

In view of this onslaught of ideas, we might expect that both Daniel and John the Revelator would have had something to say about both the controversy worldview and the underlying philosophy, which extended beyond the information provided by other Bible writers. This article seeks to examine these ideas and to complement the insights of these two prophets with those of other Bible writers and with the statements given by Christ.

## **METHODS**

The historical-grammatical approach to biblical understanding was adopted in this study. In the examination of worldview insights, the yearly sequence of festivals observed by the ancient Jewish nation has been taken as the commencement point. These datum points have been expanded by reference to the statements made by other Bible writers. The questions that underlie the formation of a worldview are significant. These are rarely teased out as such. We have attempted to answer questions on ontology, epistemology, and axiology by examining the writings of Bible writers commencing around 1500 BCE and moving to statements given in the New Testament. Four historical periods were included in the investigation, namely: ~1500, 1400–900, 800–300 BCE, and 27–100 CE, based on scholarly views of when the various Bible authors recorded their thoughts.

Selected testimonies of Christ were taken as highlighting corrections of prevailing philosophical understandings. The misunderstandings had entered human consideration due to the pursuit of sectarian explanations and syncretism. These corrections help to confirm the significant points adopted in this study in relation to matters of ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

## RESULTS

### Controversy Worldview and Bible Writers

There are a number of significant apocalyptic writers whose works have been recorded (i.e., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Zechariah and John). While all the Bible writers have added something to the Christian worldview, some have been more impactful than others.

One can approach the concept of worldview from different angles. Here we take the biblical controversy worldview first highlighted through the ancient yearly sanctuary services as providing the cornerstone ideas (Table 1; Canale, 1995). The underlying theme is that Christ, the Creator, is the only hope that humanity has and that there is a great controversy between good and evil. The good ultimately will triumph as it is based on the principle of love, which finds its expression through mercy and justice.

**Table 1. Worldview structure arising from a consideration of the yearly sequence of religious festivals connected with the sanctuary services (bold texts). The additional features are derived from the text and fill in the major missing steps**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Creation occurred with God being the active agent. The event is memorialized by the Sabbath	<b>Lev. 23:3 (Sabbath)</b> ; Gen. 2, 2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11; Isa. 66:22, 23; Heb. 4:4
Fall of humanity occurred at the hands of Satan and gave rise to the dominion of death	Gen. 2:17; 3:1-8; 5:5
Salvation is offered through the Christ to come. God's love and mercy were on display through His promised <i>sacrificial</i> atonement	<b>Lev. 23:4-8 (Passover)</b> ; Gen. 22:8, 13, 14; Luke 22:15; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7
Trust and faith in Christ's promises is central. Justification through the merits of His sacrifice (blood) is offered to those who believe	Lev. 17:11; Heb. 4:1, 2; 9:11-14, 22; 10:37-39; 11:6
Eternal security was made sure by Christ's suffering and resurrection. He is the First fruit of those from the dead	<b>Lev. 23:9-14 (First fruits)</b> ; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 14:4
God's prophetic promises were fulfilled	Gen. 3:15; Dan. 9:23-27
Holy Spirit's power was revealed with His promise of transformation (sanctification) and empowerment to spread the gospel	<b>Lev. 23:15-22 (Weeks)</b> ; Acts 2:1-21, 41, 42; Rom. 4:16, 17; 12:1, 2
God proclaims the coming of His end-time judgments to uphold the rule of truth	<b>Lev. 23:23-25 (Trumpets)</b> ; Rev. 10:6-11

Judgment ushers in the closing work of God (pre-advent and executive aspects). <i>Judicial</i> atonement revealed	<b>Lev. 23:26-32 (Atonement)</b> ; Lev. 16:5-10, 26-32; Dan. 2:44; 8:13, 14; 7: 9, 10, 13, 14; Heb. 9:27; 10:12, 13
Judgment of Satan flowing from the cross events is now executed; the righteous are vindicated	John 12:31; Dan. 7:26, 27
Deliverance of the whole of creation occurs and the rescue of the saints and restoration of all things in the New Earth takes place	<b>Lev. 23:33-43 (Tabernacles)</b> ; Rev. 7:9-17
Faithful people always have been available to represent God	Heb. 11; Rev. 7:9, 10

The controversy worldview understanding introduced by the yearly round of sanctuary festivals provides an impressive framework for understanding. It will be noted that except for two points raised (judgment of Satan at the cross and a faithful remnant always being present in the world), the essential framework was available during Moses' time. Other Bible writers contributed finer details after that time to make a more complete story. These elements are highlighted more fully in Table 2.

Most elements mentioned in this Table are well-known to Christians. Perhaps one element requires elaboration on account of its significance. This relates to the fact that being human confers value. This has been cogently argued by Professor Nick Spencer and is expressed as follows. "Humans are creatures that bear the imago dei because they are valued by God" or our worth depends on "how loved we are" (Spencer, 2016, p.74). Ellen White has expressed a similar thought as follows: "The great price heaven has paid for our redemption should give us exalted views of what we, united with Christ, may accomplish in doing the same work that Christ did in our world. ... [His sacrifice indicates] What value this places upon man!" (White, 1981, 10: 237). Alone among God's creation, humans have dignity. The concept of how loved we are is meant to permeate the response of a Christian in all aspects of living and to keep ever vivid in the mind the idea that Christ came to uplift humanity by "restoring the moral image of God in man" (White, 1948, 6:266).

Table 2. Great controversy worldview elements highlighted by selected biblical writers, which expands on the structure established by the sanctuary services (texts relating to the latter are in bold)

Theme	Text
God created the world, heavens, angels, and humans	Gen. 1; <b>Lev. 23:3</b> ; Ps. 89:11, 12; 102:25; 104:30; Eccl. 12:1; Isa. 40:26, 28; John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11
Satan, a created being, rebelled and deceived humans	Gen. 3:1-15; Isa. 14:12-14
Satan was cast to the earth from heaven	Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:16; Rev. 12:7-9
Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation	Gen. 3:1-7
Dominion of death entered	Gen. 3:3, 19; Job 14:10-12; Eccl. 9:2-6
Human rescue plan announced. Initiative commenced in order to restore His image in humans	Gen. 3:15; <b>Lev. 23:4-8</b> ; John 15:13; 2 Cor. 5:17
Rescue plan based on love ( <i>agape</i> ) and expressed through the exercise of abundant mercy	<b>Lev. 23:10-14</b> ; Gen. 3:15; Job 19:25-27; Ps. 85:8-10; Isa. 7:14, 15; 61:1-4; Zech. 9:9, 10; Dan. 9:24-27
Christ's death and resurrection secured human salvation	Isa. 45:22; 53:5; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:12-19; Heb. 9:11-15
Faithful remnant found in every generation (first fruit emphasis)	Gen. 17:1, 2; <b>Lev. 23:15-20</b> ; Isa. 49:9-13; Rev. 2:24, 25; 12:17
God's judgment schedule is proclaimed	<b>Lev. 23:23-25</b> ; Dan. 8:13, 14; Rev. 10:6-11
Judgment (pre-advent) predicted and commences	<b>Lev. 23:26-32</b> ; 16:5-9; Isa. 11:1-5; Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 26
Christ's second coming—righteous saved	Ps. 50:3-6; Dan. 8:25 last part; 12:2
Christ's second coming—wicked slain at His coming. First phase of judgment executed	Joel 3:11-16; Mal. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:8
Wicked destroyed in second death (raised to life first to witness Christ's victory)	Ps. 50:3; 97:3; Isa. 47:13, 14; Mal. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 20:9
Satan and angels destroyed. Judgment finalized	<b>Lev. 16:21, 22</b> ; Isa. 14:15-20; Rev. 20:10
Earth cleansed by fire	Zeph. 3:8; 2 Pet. 3:7
New heavens and earth made	Ps. 102:25-27; Isa. 65:17; Dan. 2:44, 45; Zech. 14:3-11; Rev. 21:1-5
Saints inhabit New Earth and rejoice	<b>Lev. 23:33-43</b> ; Isa. 65:17-25; Dan. 7:27, 28; Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:3-5
Sin will not arise a second time	Nah. 1:9

### Laying a Foundation for Sound Philosophy

Religions and philosophies grapple with a number of questions that help to make up the worldview of its adherents (Vidal, 2008). The first relates to reality (metaphysics) in which

being or existence (ontology) is an important consideration. This is a fundamental question that has stimulated thinking from early times. What entities exist? How is it possible to explain reality? Have things happened by chance, did the elements self-organize, or did God plan and create the world as we know it? Philosophies/religious ideas vary greatly in terms of concepts regarding existence (Kattsoff, 1953, p. 78; Stevenson, 2005, pp. 6, 7).

The second philosophical question is what we know and how we know (epistemology). Reason and the empirical approach are well established as methods of knowing, but there are other avenues (Knight, 2016, pp. 11–16; Stevenson, 2005, pp. 18-20). Finally, how to act (axiology) becomes significant. This has to do with values, morality and aesthetics, thus providing a set of goals for life. Answers to these questions, and others, dealing with the past and future, all contribute to one's unique worldview (Vidal, 2008).

Reality. No single Bible writer has provided complete answers to the great philosophical questions confronting humanity. Contributions on the question of reality and especially being have come from different sources and across the span of history as shown in Table 3. No effort has been made to give exhaustive reference details, nor is it possible to know the exact extent of knowledge in any particular generation, except perhaps in the Christ-generation.

For some of the points made, it could be contended that the evidence is weak. This position should not be taken lightly, for it should be abundantly evident that the Bible does not represent an exhaustive account of understandings through the various phases of history. Today, we can read words and accounts that seem obscure, but which had a rich meaning for the people of the day. To illustrate, we might mention the Azazel (scapegoat) goat of Leviticus 16. What was this goat meant to represent?

One of the goats featured on the day of Atonement was for Yahweh and the other for Azazel (Lev. 16:8). This contrast identifies Azazel as a person who is in opposition to God, an interpretation accepted by a number of expert sources. They equate Azazel with the prince of devils (Brown, Fitzmyer, & Murphy, 1968, 2:273; Helm, 1994). In our scheme (Table 3), Azazel figures under Lucifer (Satan) or under unseen principalities.

**Table 3. Some foundational aspects of a biblically supported philosophy dealing with aspects of reality spoken of through the period when sacred history was written. Indicative verses/passages only are mentioned**

Aspect	Time Frame			
	~1500 BCE	c. 1400-900 BCE	c.800-300 BCE	27-100 CE
God exists and is the agent of creation	Gen. 1:1	Prov. 22:2; Eccl. 12:1	Ps. 36:9; Isa. 48:12, 13; 51:13;	John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11
God—transcendent	Deut. 4:39	Josh. 2:11	Isa. 6:1; Hab. 3:3-6; Dan. 2:28; 7:9, 10, 13	Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Rev. 4
God—involved in human affairs (immanent)	Gen. 2:15, 16, 19; Deut. 4:7-13; 5:24	1 Sam. 3:4-10	Dan. 3:25, 28	Acts 9:1-5; Rev. 2, 3
Human inferiority to the Divine	Gen. 3:22, 23; 4:9-13	Josh. 2:11	Jer. 13:16; Dan. 2:20-23, 44	Matt. 26:53; Rev. 6:15-17
Lucifer (Satan)—originator of evil	Gen. 3:1-5, 15; Job 2:1, 2	2 Sam. 24:10; cf. 1 Chron. 21:1	Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:14-17	Matt. 4:1-11; Rev. 12:9
Unseen (mostly) principalities and powers exist (good and evil)	Gen. 3:24	Judg. 2:1-4; 1 Sam. 28:7-14	Isa. 8:19; Dan. 10:9-12, 16-21	Rom. 8:38; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 16:14
Human mortality due to disobedience	Gen. 2:17; 5:5	2 Sam. 1:4; Eccl. 9:5	Isa. 25:8; Dan. 3:22	John 11:14; Rev. 20:12-14
Need of a Saviour	Gen. 3:15; Job 19:25	2 Sam. 22	Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 36:23-29	John 4:42; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Tim. 4:10
Role of Holy Spirit	Gen. 6:3; Exod. 35:31; Num. 11:29	Judg. 3:9, 10	Ps. 51:11-13; Isa. 11:1, 2; 63:11-14; Ezek. 36:27	1 Cor. 2:11-14; Gal. 5:16-25; 1 Thess. 4:3-8
Life has purpose	Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15	1 Sam. 1:17-22	Isa. 41:8, 9; Dan. 12:4, 9, 13	Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 22: 12, 14
Body/soul: no dualism	Gen. 2:7	Eccl. 3:18-21; 9:5-10	Ps. 49:12; Ezek. 18:4	1 Thess. 4:15-17
Resurrection of the body a reality	Job 19:26;	1 Kings 17:17-24	Dan. 12:13	John 11:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Rev. 7:9, 10
Restoration and elimination of evil	Lev. 16:21, 22; 23:33-43; Job 19:25-27	1 Sam. 2:9, 10	Isa. 11:3-9; 65:17-19; 66:14-16	1 Thess. 4:13-17; 2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev.



				20:7-10
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The suggested association with an evil power is strengthened by the indication that the person charged with taking the Azazel goat into the wilderness was defiled by the act, meaning it did not represent a sin offering (Lev. 16:26; cf. 17:11), for it was not slain, but simply taken into the wilderness to die (Hardinge, 1991, pp. 517, 518). It carried Israel’s guilt or, in other words, the responsibility for tempting people to disobey God, which represents an indication of the responsibility that finally will be placed to Satan’s account.

The existence of evil agencies and a spiritual warfare is clearly presented in Scripture (e.g., Eph. 6:12). The operation of the world is not dependent on the coexistence of good and evil. Thankfully, evil will not have an eternal existence. The Christian worldview is clear and should not be confused with other worldviews (Hiebert, 2000).

Knowing. The avenues of knowing in classical philosophy centre on logic (deductive and inductive—Kattsoff, 1953, p. 67). In the scientific domain logic, experimentation, and combinations of these approaches define the limits. However, there are other avenues of knowing accepted by believers, as illustrated in Table 4. Of the sources indicated, the prophets Daniel and John mentioned or demonstrated by their actions, a heaven-inspired opinion on fundamental aspects of knowing, which is basic to Christian philosophy. Each provides examples of knowing in the four areas commonly understood as being capable of contributing to certainty for a Christian believer. These four areas of knowing were affirmed by our Lord (e.g., Luke 7:22, 23; 10:2-9, 17; 14:8-11; 15:11-25; 24:25-27).

**Table 4. Some foundational aspects of knowing acknowledged in Scripture through the period when sacred history was written. Indicative verses/passages only are mentioned.**

Aspect	Time frame			
	~1500 BCE	c. 1400-900 BCE	c.800-300 BCE	27-100 CE
Revelation and/or Scripture	Job 38-41	1 Sam. 3:10-14; 1 Kings 17:16	Isa. 45:1-3; Dan. 9:2	2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Rev. 1:3, 9-11
Experience (authority)	Exod. 17:11-13; Job 42:7-10	Josh. 4:22-24; 23:14	Ps. 32; Dan. 3:21, 26–28	2 Pet. 1:16-18; Rev. 12:11
Logic (reason)	Job 21:22-34; Exod. 18:12-26	Josh. 23:14-16; Judg. 13:22-24	Dan. 9:1-6	Acts 17:11; Heb. 6:4-6; Rev. 13:18
Experimentation	Gen. 2:19; 3:6, 7; 11:2-9	Judg. 6:37-40; 1 Kings 18:20-39; Ps. 34:8	Dan. 1:12-19	Matt. 6:33; Rev. 10:9-11

Acting. No attempt will be made to look at all aspects of axiology. Ideas of fundamental significance to our acting relate to human dignity and the concept of the equality of human beings. These principles were established at creation when both male and female were created in God's image (Gen. 1:27; Table 5). The ideas would ultimately have some impact on the development of democratic societies in the West. Their full blooming would usher in the principles of justice and the giving of liberties and rights to all irrespective of their societal standing (Spencer, 2016, pp. 40, 41, 57–63).

The second principle was also established at creation and relates to human attitudes towards God's revealed will. Such information was given by God, angels, prophets and visionaries and the essential features now are recorded in the Scriptures (e.g., Gen. 2:16, 17; Luke 24:27). The third principle identified relates to the care of God's second book of information—nature. Rather than looking at the resources of the natural world as available to be used and abused to satisfy human desires, the Bible indicates that there are lessons about God's character and ways of acting available to serious students of this book (Rom. 1:20; 2:14–16). In addition, failure to protect this precious resource will bring its own adverse consequences (Rev. 11:18).

When more detailed aspects of acting are examined that guide human behaviour, it is found that for believers God's universal moral code has been revered from the beginning, as it represents God's character. This Code contains two significant elements—our relationship with God and also other humans (Matt. 22:36–40). The understanding held by the Jews about the nature of their deity and the communications received from Him exerted a profound influence on the ethics practiced in contrast to other belief systems (Nichol, Cottrell, Neufeld, & Neuffer, 1956, 5:62). It has not gone beyond notice that many of the norms accepted in various societies as representing the good are in agreement with this Code (Lewis, 1973, pp. 95–121). However, the distinguishing feature of the true followers of God is their response to the demonstration of their worth and dignity on account of being made in God's image (admittedly debased by sin) and His love expressed in Christ's sacrifice for them. For the willing, God's grace transforms that which has been damaged (Knight, 1992, pp. 113, 143, 173; Wolters, 1984)

**Table 5. Some foundational aspects and details of a biblically supported philosophy, relating to the manner of acting (ethics), spoken of through the period when sacred history was written. Indicative verses/passages only are mentioned**

Aspect	Time frame			
	~1500 BCE	c. 1400-900 BCE	c.800-300 BCE	27-100 CE
<i>Foundational principles (human characteristics/responsibilities)</i>				
Made in God's image	Gen. 1:26, 27 (possessed pre-Fall)	Ps. 51:10 (renewal needed)	Ezek. 36:26-28 (renewal needed)	Acts 4:10-12; Col. 3:9, 10 (renewal needed)
Respecting and obeying God's revealed will	Gen. 2:16, 17; cf. 3:4-11; Deut. 28	1 Sam. 15:22	2 Chron. 20:20; Jer. 9:13-16; Zech. 6:15	2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:18-21
Care of creation and/or God's invisible attributes seen	Gen. 2:15; 3:17-19	Judg. 9:7-20 (note value of trees/vines); Prov. 6:6; 12:10	Isa. 9:8-11	Luke 12:6, 7; Rom. 1:20; Rev. 11:18 (last part)
<i>Details of relationships with God</i>				
Concept of sacred	Exod. 19:9-15; Deut. 10:12-16; 26:16-19	1 Sam. 2:35; Prov. 9:10	Dan. 5:22-28; Hab. 2:18-20	2 Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 5:13, 14; 7:9-12
Attitude to concept of a universal moral code	Lev. 26; Deut. 5:6-21, 29; 28:1	Josh. 22:5; Prov. 10:27-32	Dan. 7:20, 25, 26; Zeph. 3:12-15	Matt. 22:36-40; Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14, 15
Response to God's mercy and justice	Deut. 4:32-40; 5:29; 12:10-12	Josh. 24:15; Prov. 1:7, 20-23	Ezek. 18:30-32; Dan. 9:8-19	Acts 2:38; 16:31; Rev. 7:9,10; cf. 6:14-16

### **Jesus Corrected Worldview and Other Misunderstandings**

Jesus' powerful sermon on the Mount corrected many misunderstandings held by the leaders and people of His day. Some of these ideas can be attributed to syncretism (e.g., Bickerman, 1962; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018b; Nichol, Cottrell, Neufeld, & Neuffer, 1955, 4:1129; 1956, 5:51-53, 93, 94; Nygren, 1982, p. 200). He sought to reveal the true nature of the Messiah they looked for, not One who would deliver from the domination of Rome and would become a ruler of nations, but rather One who would fulfill the symbolism of the sanctuary and give His life for all and provide deliverance from sin and ultimately death. He indicated that the kingdom of God was at hand (Matt. 4:17), just as John the Baptist had

taught (White, 1956, pp. 1–3). Ultimately, Jesus' death on the cross destroyed the notion that the Messiah was to set up an earthly kingdom at this time.

He challenged their self-sufficiency and thoughts of goodness by His opening remarks on the blessings available to those who sensed their spiritual poverty and mourned their deficiencies (Matt. 5:2–4). In upholding meekness (v. 5) as a quality to be cultivated and admired, He commenced to open their understanding to the concept that recreating the image of God in humanity was the aim of the gospel and its chief proponent was the Messiah. His statement about purity of heart (v. 8) was later expanded through references to Old Testament sayings (Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). A major emphasis of His teaching was that the motives, attitudes, and actions displayed were the important factors in determining whether an individual was a disciple of God. Only those displaying such qualities truly understand the character of God (possessing self-sacrificing or agape love—White, 1956, p. 25). And a saving relationship with God can only flow from a deep understanding of His true character (Brown, 1968, p. 288).

The philosophical position of the Jews arose from their thinking that fellowship with God occurred when acting in accordance with the law and that God loves only the righteous (nomos—moral conduct defined by law). Doing good works was considered a means of winning forgiveness (cf. Matt. 19:16-21; Nygren, 1982, pp. 200, 248). Jesus overturned their system of valuation (“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” Mark 2:17, NKJV). By contrast, agape, the deepest sentiment found in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5; 10:12-21; 30:6), proclaimed that the salvation initiative came from God, His love was unmotivated, His sacrifice through Jesus gave value to humans, in turn they contributed nothing to their own salvation. Jesus' sacrifice provided a way to escape eternal death (Nygren, 1982, p. 210).

God is love is writ large in the gospels, illustrating that the foundation of God's throne are righteousness and justice. His love is expressed particularly through His abiding mercy (Ps. 89:14). This verse places righteousness and justice as the foundation of God's throne with mercy and truth ever in attendance and preceding justice (Tate, 1990, 20:422). This was the message of the sanctuary; the mercy seat was above the law, which had been broken and for which a sacrifice was required to satisfy its demands. This sacrifice was made by Christ (Rom. 3:24, 25). Mercy is illustrated through the parables (e.g., Matt. 20:1-16; 22:1-14) and also justice (e.g., Matt. 11:20-24; 20:9-16; Luke 11:29-32; Rom. 2:14-16). As one commentator has said “justice and grace ultimately belong together” (Weiser, 1962, p. 592).

Jesus continually upheld the concept that God's character was unchangeable, and is expressed in the Law, (Matt. 5:17; 22:36-40; John 3:16). Disregard for and disobedience to its principles required the death of the sinner as symbolized through the sanctuary services (Hardinge, 1991, p. 218; cf. Rom. 3:21-26). Settled disobedience signaled identification with the accuser of the brethren, Satan. The purpose of Jesus' death was to take the penalty of human disobedience on His own shoulders, hence providing a way of escape from eternal death by all those who sincerely believed (Gen. 3:15; John 3:16-19). Jesus life was a lesson book in practical philosophy in that rhetoric matched reality.

The misunderstandings of the Jewish leaders was deep rooted and but few apparently perceived their deficiencies. Nevertheless, Jesus sought to correct their understanding of the kingdom of God (Luke 17:20, 21; 19:38-40). He sought to refocus the worldview of those who would identify with Him. He emphasized rebirth and recreation of the image of God within (Matt. 5:48; John 3:5-8), service to others (Matt. 22:38, 39; 28:19, 20; John 15:13; Acts 1:8), the reality of the resurrection of the body (Matt. 22:29-32), and a joyful looking forward to the hereafter and the termination of the great controversy (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 17:20-35).

Jesus corrected the content and refocused the shape of Christian belief and also showed the internal consistency of God's message to humanity. His ministry also served to elevate the significance of personal experience and observation, hence confirming the acts of God in space and time (Brown, 1968, p. 289).

## **DISCUSSION**

From our perspective, the survey of the various periods of sacred history indicates the possibility of a basic understanding of the great controversy and the associated philosophical principles in each period. This is not to suggest that the writers and certainly not the listeners/readers would share our current understandings. For example, Job's struggled to understand his predicament, but he could not manage this challenge within the knowledge base available at that time (Job 7:1-19). When his experience was recorded, a viable answer was recorded as an introduction to his suffering (Job 2:2-7; cf. James 5:11).

With the introduction of the sanctuary system of ceremonies and worship, the basic elements of the great controversy theme were highlighted each religious year. Also on a daily/weekly basis the gospel was preached through the activities of the priests and a faith response was invited from the congregation, but few responded with an appropriate attitude and whole-hearted dedication (Heb. 4:2).

Societal and cultural practices of nations surrounding the Israelites were constant attractants. Just as we take on selected societal norms today, so did previous people groups. Just as leaders and scholars today imbibe thoughts, methods of interpretation, and understandings from others of different faiths (Canale, 2011) or no faith, so did the Jewish leaders of old.

The account of the seven churches in Revelation stands as a stark reminder that, irrespective of the biblical understandings provided by our Lord, many departures from faith and variant interpretations of reality would be evident over time. The subsequent accounts given in chapters 13 and 14 reveal something of the nature and intensity of the differences that are and will continue to develop within the Christian church. Further research might be conducted on the origin of changes seen in today's major Christian churches that are exerting a contrary impact. The nature of these impacts might also be highlighted in order to indicate their significance to salvation.

Of all the prophets, Jesus made the most statements about reality, knowing, and acting. Indeed, if all the headings in Tables 3 to 5 are researched in His recorded sayings, there is something to report under each. All are consistent with the sentiments expressed in these Tables (understandably, He differed from humans in His relationship to the angels). This means He confirmed all the other points made. Perhaps the Christ-generation was the first one to have a comprehensive worldview and the associated philosophical underpinnings. Jesus went beyond the headings we have listed in some instances giving rare insights into the hereafter (e.g., Luke 20:34-36). In a very real sense, in these teachings Christ answered the well-known Epicurean accusation, and less well known Buddhist one, about an able, powerful and merciful God allowing evil and suffering (Shipton & Shipton, 2018).

On our part, the combined witness of Scripture and the clarity of prophetic advice given to the church of Laodicea should stand surety for a safe passage through the turbulent events in prospect. The challenge is to continue to make the Bible the source of the principles guiding its interpretation and to remember how the Lord has led us and His teaching recorded by His servants (White, 1949, 9:10).

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