



Lesson Guide

Lesson 3 - Anthropology: who is Man?

Introduction

Lesson 3 takes us into the western regions of the compass, where we engage in an in-depth examination of biblical and contemporary ideas about the nature of the human race. The focus of the discussion is *anthropology*: Who is man? Where did he come from? What is the meaning and purpose of his existence? In the course of this study, Dr. Tackett demonstrates that the answers we bring to these questions have a direct bearing upon our approach to another pressing problem, one of the thorniest and most challenging of all – *Why is there evil in the world?*

Themes

Having established the importance of determining whether the cosmos is to be viewed as an *open* or a *closed box*, Dr. Tackett now moves on to examine another defining aspect of any comprehensive worldview: its basic assumptions about *mankind*. Here again we discover a fundamental conflict between Christianity and the perspective of contemporary culture. The Bible teaches that man consists of both body and spirit and is created in the image of God; our culture assumes that he is purely material, the product of mindless, purposeless forces. The Bible says that man has rebelled against God and fallen from his original state of innocence; contemporary thought maintains that he is “basically good.” The Bible affirms man’s need for divine grace, redemption, and regeneration; popular thinking asserts that “self-actualization” is the key to happiness and fulfillment.

Christianity represents evil as the product of the *Cosmic Battle* that rages *within* man – the conflict between humanity as it was *meant* to be and what it has *actually become* as a result of sin. Godless philosophy and psychology, on the other hand, can suggest only one possible solution to the problem of evil in the world: man must throw off the restraints of superimposed social conventions and institutions (i.e., any kind of moral standard) and pursue “self-fulfillment” to the fullest possible extent. This is what Dr. Tackett calls “the pernicious lie.”

Points to Watch for

Some viewers – even those who consider themselves Christians – may have difficulty accepting the idea that “self-fulfillment” and the call to “follow your heart” are inconsistent with a Christian worldview. Others may object to Dr. Tackett’s assertion that a great deal of the radical social and political activism we see in the world today is driven primarily by secular man’s sinful desire to throw off the shackles of “God’s social design.” All will find it stimulating and profitable to wrestle with the question he poses: *why* do non-believers and evolutionists find evil so troubling?

Discussion Questions (Pick 3 or 4 for you discussion time)

- 1) We looked at a number of things on this tour. Let's list some of the key elements.
 - a. What were they?
 - b. Which ones do you think were most important or critical?
 - c. Why?
- 2) Let's discuss the truth claim that man is basically good.
 - a. Do you see any evidence that our culture has bought this notion? What is that evidence?
 - b. Do you think we live in a culture of "blame"? If so, how is that linked to the notion that man is basically good? (See next)
 - c. What about "victim mentality"? Is that related? If so, how? (If I am basically good, then anything bad that happens to me must be caused by someone or something outside of me. I will always find someone or something to blame for my troubles or situation.)
 - d. What about the issue of "tolerance"? Any linkage? Why or why not?
- 3) Consider Maslow's position that man must self-actualize by getting in touch their inner desires and bring them out.
 - a. What are the consequences of this?
 - b. Why would it give rise to a hostility toward Christianity? (Biblical Christianity holds to a transcendent absolute moral truth that would stand against someone doing whatever they well please. This thwarts "self-actualization" and the highest need and achievement of man.)
- 4) Let's revisit the Carl Rodgers' statement: "I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature."
 - a. What are the implications of this view of man in relation to what man really needs?
 - b. What does it do to the biblical concept that man needs a Savior? (It means that man has no need of a spiritual Savior. He may need a physical savior, such as the civil government, but not a spiritual One.)
- 5) Why do Christians so often feel "stumped" when non-believers point to the existence of evil in the world? According to this discussion, what is the ultimate source of evil? (Without oversimplifying the problem, it is important to state that Christians struggle with this issue largely because they do not know the Word of God. On the whole, the Bible makes it clear that responsibility for the problem of evil lies not at *God's* doorstep, but at our own. Evil flows directly from man's decision to reject the truth of God and embrace a lie.)
- 6) How does your worldview influence your definition of *evil*? (Carried to its logical conclusion, the *cosmic cube* or *closed-box* view of the world actually renders the concept of *evil* meaningless. If "the stuff in the box" is all there is, there can be no basis for value judgments such as "good" and "bad." Everything simply *is what it is*. This is why Dr. Tackett suggests that it can be telling to ask non-believers, "Why does evil *bother* you?")
- 7) What are the major differences between the Bible's view of man and autonomous man's view of himself? (Scripture represents man as having existed in several different "modes" or "states," all of which continue to play a role in his present nature and identity: created innocent; fallen through rebellion and disobedience; dead in trespasses

and sins; redeemed by grace through faith; glorified by identification with Christ. Contemporary man, on the other hand, sees himself as “basically good,” but capable of being “corrupted” by the pressure of “social institutions.” In other words, following Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he views himself as just another aspect of “the stuff in the box,” which is best off when left to follow its own “natural” inclinations.)

- 8) **How might a person’s understanding of human nature and the meaning of human life determine his or her behavior or lifestyle? Given the basic distinctions between biblical and man-centered *anthropology*, how would we expect a believer’s behavior to differ from that of a non-believer?** (This question brings us back to the connection between “faith” and “action.” Our behavior is determined by our concept of truth. Those who believe that man is happiest when he seeks to “actualize” himself without regard to any external standard of right and wrong will behave accordingly. Christians, on the other hand, ought to act as if they consider themselves accountable to a higher authority.)

- 9) **How do differing views of mankind play into the social struggles and conflicts we see in our culture today?** (According to Dr. Tackett, a vast amount of the social unrest and activism we see around us today is attributable to the human impulse to throw off the “chains” of the higher authority of God. There is potential here for a lively discussion of the possible connections between man’s quest for independence and issues such as feminism, gay rights, cohabitation, and relativistic morals.)