XXXIV. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective What Does the Bible Say?
"Developing a Christian Mind, Part 4" Acts 17:10–34 Dr. Harry L. Reeder III February 14, 2016 – Evening sermon

We will be looking at a number of passages in this study in order for us to be expeditious in our study of developing the Christian mind, a Christian world and life view. I'd like to start by setting it up this way. This is the week that pitchers and catchers are headed for Spring training and behind them will come the rest of the players in a couple of weeks. When they get there they will be working on the basics. Infielders will start by getting ground balls hit to them that will eventually come faster and faster and harder and harder. They will be looking for the players to always be on their toes. You can't be on your heels. In baseball you have to work from the ground up and secondly you have to stay on your toes. So why did I give you this illustration?

This is where I think the Christian church is today. The world comes at you and it shoots you fast balls with the ground balls coming at you. We are trying to field them on our heels. I watch our presidential candidates who do it constantly. I'm not criticizing any one of them. They confess Christ and I'm grateful for that but here comes the media or the cultural elites who come at them with the fireball questions. I have watched how so easily they go back on their heels and usually that will be an error almost every single time. It's not just true in baseball but it's also true in basketball. When you're on your heels the opponent is by you and has scored. Even I could get by you and score if you're on your heels. You have to stay on your toes and ready.

That's what I want to get to you. Get on your toes theologically so you have a Christian world and life view. You can't be lazy about this anymore. The culture used to be somewhat in our league with us and there were many places you could go that would have a Christian world and life view but that's just not there anymore. On the contrary it's on the attack. I see Christians on their heels in business, in school, on their teams, at work, in the classroom and they are not ready to respond. Usually they just end up saying "I just believe the Bible says that." That's about the best shot we get at it. There is much more to it in terms of how we want to develop what the Bible says and how we want to communicate with a world and life view.

For instance, one candidate recently because he had confessed somewhere in a smaller group setting that he believed in creation where God made the heavens and the earth and there was a real Adam and Eve, then they came after him in the news conference on that. They said "Are you actually telling us that you believe there was an Adam and an Eve?" Then he started to back pedal and I understand what was going on there but to me the answer was simple. I would have said "Of course I do and that's why I'm running for president of the United States. When I look out in the world I don't see a collection of mutated germs that happen to crawl up out of a slim pit accidently but I actually see people made in the image of God with dignity. That's why I want to give my life to be a good magistrate for them. I see them with dignity." I think then the media go on their heels but you have to be on your toes when it comes to you.

You will get the same thing. So how do we do that? Let me confess that I have slowed down on this first element of creation but if we don't get the first plank of the world and life view in place which is the doctrine of creation the rest of them make no sense. That's why the

humanist manifesto starts off its first article on atheistic Darwinian evolution because it knows the battle is fought on who am I, how did I get here, why am I here and where am I going. It all begins with the doctrine of creation. We have to start sharpening the lenses and getting the world smudges off the lenses.

The reason this is so important is basically there are two world and life views. We draw this from what Jesus said when he was telling Peter that he had his interests on man's view. Peter is a believer but he had the wrong pair of glasses on. Jesus told him He was going to go to the cross and die Peter said "God forbid" and Jesus said "Get thee behind Me Satan because you have set your mind on man's interest." You may be well intentioned but you are not seeing it accurately. He has set his mind on man's interest and not God's interest and those are the two world and life views. There are multiple –isms but there is basically a theistic God centered world view or a man-centered.

There is the sovereign God or the sovereign self. You live in a culture that is embracing the sovereign self. I can walk up to a bathroom and sovereignly tell myself what gender I am or what marriage is supposed to be or what sexuality is or what a family is. The sovereign self determines its self-centered, self-reliant, self-absorbed life view as opposed to the God centered, God reliant, God confident life view. Those are the two life views that are before us. So let's start with this definition.

To live a faithful and effective Christian lifestyle, a Christian must develop a Christcentered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled life view propelled by a Christ-consumed life love saturated by persistent prayer. In other words, your life love is worked out by your life view and it's seen in your life style. That life view answers four framing questions. One why is there something rather than nothing. Two, why are some things right and other things wrong? Is it a sovereign God that says it or the sovereign self? Three, what things are right and what things are wrong? We run into this question every single day when someone says 'well, for me that's wrong' (which is not the language of believers) but whatever is for you doesn't determine whether it's right or wrong or not. I'm hoping you line up with what is right and wrong but you don't determine what's right or wrong. God's Word determines what is right or wrong? Is it decided by the sovereign God or the sovereign self for those are your two choices.

When the sovereign self life view comes at you, you can't be on your heels. You have to be on your toes. You have to know how to field it, how to respond to it and how to deal with it. That means first of all we're developing theology. You can't get anything right until you get the doctrine of God and you get that from creation, redemption and providence. When you get who God is then you know who man is and that's anthropology. When you get that in place you get epistemology which is knowing what is right and how you know what is right. Then you get soteriology which is how a man can be right with God and that is the doctrine of salvation or the Good News of the Gospel. That leads us to where everything is headed – eschatology.

Do you have a Hegelian world and life view? If you're a socialist, a Marxist, a Darwinian evolutionist, then you are a Hegelian. That is where all those things came from. A man named Hegel said "thesis, antithesis, conflict, synthesis is the result of the thesis and the antithesis. The result is the synthesis which creates the new antithesis because the synthesis is the new thesis." So Karl Marx grabbed it and said "The haves (bourgeoisie) and the have-nots (proletariat) will have a revolution and the result is a new bourgeoisie that will give rise to a new proletariat" and all of life is just a downward circle of revolution, revolution, revolution. Darwin got it and through that same philosophy read the fossil record wrongly. You have the animal, the mutation, the thesis, the antithesis, the two come together and create the new species which creates a new mutation and the two of those come together.

Here's the problem. The Marxist revolution always leads downward and according to law mutation leads downward as well but somehow Darwin is trying to get this thing moving upward. There is no evidence of it moving upward at all because it doesn't move upward but he applied a philosophical world and life view. So Darwin said here's the species, here's the mutation, here's its cohabitation and reproduction which then gives a new species which creates a new mutation. He didn't have a doctrine of revolution but a doctrine of evolution that in reality is devolution. So that was a world and life view through which they read the evidences and the records that were there. Almost all those world and life views are circular and downward.

I know the Bible says what goes around comes around for it's right next to godliness is next to cleanliness. We get into this notion that everything is circular. There is nothing new under the sun because sin is sin it only refabricates itself but we aren't in a circle just going around, up or down. We are on a line – alpha to omega, beginning and end. When you get there, there is another beginning that is forever and it's called eternity. We have a linear view of life not a circular view of life. You can't get this right until you get the first thing right about creation. In other words, these four personal questions – who am I, where did I come from, why am I here and where am I going – need to be answered. Let's start by first looking at Genesis 1. I will be reading selected verses throughout.

Genesis 1:1–2 says [1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Right here you find Darwin's trinity popularized by Carl Sagan when he said 'the cosmos, that is all there is, that is all there was, that is all there ever will be.' He is talking about space, time and matter and that is the trinity. If you give matter and space enough time then maybe we can presuppose that this order leads to order.

God's Word says there is the Father, who is the Author. There is the Son who is the Accomplisher. There is the Holy Spirit and He is the Superintendent. There is the real Trinity. It's not space, time and matter but it's Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit bring into existence space, time and matter. See time, ...in the beginning. God created beginnings. He created a box called time. When did God begin? That doesn't apply because God is eternal. God began beginnings for that is His box and that box doesn't fit around Him because He made the box. He made a beginning and end. Secondly, it says the earth was without form. Earth is matter. In the beginning which is time, God created the heavens which is space, and the earth which is matter. Here is time, space and matter and they are the result the eternal Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What about us?

Genesis 1:26–28 says [26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

[28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God now puts man made in His image, male and female, over the creation and it takes both male and female to properly image Him but that is what they do, they image Him. Then He puts them over Their creation. Notice they don't crawl up out of the creation accidently but they are made by the hand of God to be the rulers over that creation. They are to have dominion over the creation and subdue it. They are to be fruitful, multiply and fill the creation and God will make them able to do that.

Why is it that every time someone gets on TV with the humane society and puts these dogs with fleas on them that people are ready to write a check to them? It is because God put that on our heart to take care of them. It's not because they are your cousins. It is because God made you in His image to take care of those whom He created to surround you with. That's why your heart goes out to that. Why is it that we're concerned about the environment? It is not because the earth is our mother. It is because it is our home. God made it. You learn from childhood to take care of your home, particularly if you don't own it and you're supposed to give it back as a good steward. That gives our perspective on these very crucial issues. It is our world and life view of how we see it – to have dominion and to rule over it.

Now let's look at Psalm 19. Here we are learning our Christian world and life view from the Word but there was something for us to learn our Christian world and life view before the Word. Where can we learn about our God – our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer? Psalm 19:1–6 says [1] The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. [2] Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. [3] There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. [4] Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, [5] which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. [6] Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

Now let's look at Romans 1 and see how Paul uses this as he writes to the church at Rome. Romans 1:18–23 says [18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking (sovereign self life view), and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

You start off knowing God. You don't meet 4 year old atheists. You have to work at it. This is why Ann Sullivan who broke through a blind, deaf Helen Keller with water and they began to communicate and Ann communicated God to Helen by spelling it in her hands. Helen's answer was "Oh I already knew Him, I just didn't have the Name for Him." We are born with the knowledge of God. We have to work at not believing. Then comes the downward spiral of the sovereign self life view with sexual promiscuity, sexual perversion and sexual approval of sin as the chapter goes on to describe.

Now I'd like to look at Acts 17. I have found this passage so instructive and I've read this passage so many times to learn how to minister in a neo pagan culture which is where I am. Paul went into a pagan culture and I can learn from him. Acts 17:16–21 says [16] Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. [17] So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. [18] Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this

babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. [19] And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? [20] For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." [21] Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

These people are trying to put Paul on his heels. They are mocking him, attacking him and assaulting him. These are the intelligentsia of the intelligent. All this does is open a door for a man who has a world and life view. Paul understands a Christ centered world and life view. Basically this passage is telling you that paganism doesn't work so they have to keep trying to find something that will. Whenever I get into any reasoning debate with someone who are asking honest question, I am going to give them honest answer but I always know they believe, worship and are religious about what they are telling me and it's not working. So I want to tell them about the One whose work is sure and right.

Acts 17:22–28 says [22] So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for "In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

Paul starts with creation. He goes to the all sufficient, all creator God. Then he goes to the sustaining sovereign God. God is in the midst of us. He points out that even false world and life views get it right every once in a while (vs 28) and we call that common grace. When a clock is broken it is still right two times a day. Now you wouldn't depend on that clock. There are world and life views that get things right in God's common grace but you don't depend on them because they are broken. Then Paul continues.

Acts 17:29–33 says [29] Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

[32] Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." [33] So Paul went out from their midst. [34] But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

God is not imagined up by you. God reveals Himself. I was so brokenhearted when the mainline Presbyterian Church did a conference called reimagining God. Reimaging God is repeating the same mistake and we shouldn't have imaged Him to begin with. He has revealed Himself in His Word. That is why He says not to make images or imagination statements about Him. Go to My Word because that is where I will reveal Myself to you. He has made a way for you to be right with Him. Here we learn that every time you share Christ with a Christian world and life view some get it, some don't and some you get to go back and talk with again. That's what happened with the Apostle Paul.

Paul has taken everything that we have talked about and in that one statement he has used those five elements of a Christian world and life view – creation, fall, redemption, providence and consummation. That is why our Apostle's Creed begins will I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. We start with creation. What did we learn in this? We learned that something comes from nothing because Someone brought it into existence by the Word of His power.

We learned five essentials of the essential doctrine of creation starting with (1) ex-Nihilo – creation – what does He make in His creation from nothing? He makes the historical Adam and Eve (2) and He puts them in a covenant of creation (3). He makes Adam the head of all humanity (4). So Adam is our federal head – from one man, Paul says, He made all of the human race and when Adam acted you and I acted but praise God there is another Head. That Second Adam is Jesus Christ and when He acted on our behalf we were blessed through what He has done. He reveals His ordinances of creation (5) – the sanctity of work, rest, marriage/family, Sabbath/week (work 6, rest 1), sexuality. All of those things are revealed in the doctrine of creation and our world and life view begins to make sense as it begins to be put together from God's revealed Word.

So as we walked through Acts 17 what do we begin to learn? I want to start answering the world and life view questions here. By looking at creation, although we're not at the fall yet, the doctrine of creation reveals who God is. Here are ten statements we learned from Acts 17. The first thing is that this God reveals Himself and that's why John says 'God is light.' And He overcomes the darkness. God reveals Himself in two ways – to everyone in creation and then to His people through His Word. You can know God in creation, His eternal attributes and His divine power is clearly seen in creation. You have to suppress the truth in sin not to see and acknowledge the majesty of God, the Creator. You have to do something with the sovereign self in rebellion against God and that's why the Bible says 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' for as sinners we suppress God's glory in order to exalt our own as the sovereign self.

God is shouting every day and night, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun to see His majesty, His glory in creation. Every morning you get up that computer boots up and says God is glorious when you walk out there. Even when you get to the end of the day the glory of God is shouting out through the setting of the sun. We keep trying to create a software that will deny it in the sovereign self. God reveals Himself in creation, in general revelation and in His Word through special revelation.

The second thing we learned is that God is Omnipotent. That means He is El Shaddai. He is Almighty. God does not get power from us. Do you remember the spiritual warfare books that were put out that were novels? I read them all. I enjoyed them and was so glad it awakened God's people to the reality of spiritual warfare but a world and life view is something that is fundamentally strong. As we prayed, the Prince, meaning Christ was given strength. Our prayers are not designed to give Him strength. Our prayers are designed for us to gain strength from Him. He doesn't get power from us. He is Almighty, El Shaddai. Our power comes from Him. It is not inherent. It is given to us. God is omnipotent. He has all power and all authority belongs to Him. Thirdly, God is Omniscient. That means all knowledge belongs to Him. Wisdom belongs to Him. That's why I go to Him and say "God, give me wisdom from above, by Your Word, by Your Spirit on how to live life for Jesus Christ. Give me the wisdom of a consistent Christian world and life view because You are the Source of all knowledge."

The fourth thing we've learned about God the Creator is that He is Omnipresent. He is infinite. In our catechism it says who is God, God is a Spirit. You can't put your hands on Him but He reveals Himself everywhere. He is eternal. He is without boundaries.

Fifthly, God is eternal. He doesn't have a beginning and an end. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning of the end. He begins the beginnings and He has appointed a day for the end as it ushers in a new heavens and a new earth.

The sixth thing is that God is transcendent. He is over all of His creation. I remember the worship wars in the 1990s. In the 1980s we walked into this church and the decision had been made to acknowledge the eminence of God but when you gathered here you were going to create some architecture that would remind you that every time you stepped in that God was glorious. You built a sanctuary that shouts the transcendence of God. That He is high and lifted up and that's why I can be lifted up when He comes to me.

The seventh thing is He is Immanent. He is also in all things. He is among His creation. He's in the midst of it. That's the eminence of God. He is right here with us. Paul said in Acts 17 that the Lord is near to you. You can know Him. You can find Him.

Number eight is that He is sufficient. He needs nothing. He doesn't need our idols. He doesn't need our worship or commitment or even us. That is what makes it so wonderful about the Gospel. God saved me because He loved me and He loved me not because He needed me but because I needed Him. We have to get that world and life view of the all sufficiency of God in place.

Nine is that God is righteous and just. Everyone will give an account to Him. He is the Judge of all of His creation. You have been made in His image and you and I are responsible. Why did He make you? He made you for His glory and your joy in Him. When He made Adam and Eve, where did He walk with them? He walked with them in the Garden. He didn't just make them and cut them loose. He made them to fellowship with them that they could have the joy of being with Him, for the fellowship of the Trinity is perfect. It was so they could not only be like Him, made in His image, but they could enjoy Him. In our sovereign self we say 'no I don't need You for I am sufficient for me.' That is because it is all about me. God holds us accountable for our sin against Him and His glory and the fact that we exchange the joy of our Lord for drowning in the chaos and despair of sin and the illusion of self-exaltation.

The tenth and final thing is that God is sovereign. He does as He pleases. The clay does not say to the Potter 'why did you make me like this.' The clay gives glory to the Potter and says 'keep molding me. I am Yours and You are mine.'

This will be the conclusion on the doctrine of creation but this is so essential in the framework of a Christian world and life view. It is absolutely crucial. You begin to think why is there something rather than nothing? There is something rather than nothing not because nothing invented something but because there was Someone who brought something from nothing. Why are there things right and things wrong? It is because God made us in His image and wrote His attributes, His law, upon our hearts. Why do we know that some things are right and some things are wrong? The most secular person can't get away from theological statements of what is right and what is wrong. The ultimate decision is who or what determines what we believe is

a sovereign God who made all, is the One who reveals what things are right and what things are wrong. What are the consequences of what is right and what is wrong?

In this first plank of our Christian world and life view what do you know? I am not an accident. I have been made by the sovereign hand of God. I bear the image of God. Image Deo – I am an image bearer of God. That's why I can communicate and reveal my heart for I am made in His image. That's why, I'm not all wise, but I can get some wisdom for I am made in His image. That's why I believe some things are good, beautiful and true. Good, beauty and truth is not in the eye of the beholder for it has been given by the Creator who is fixing my eyes to rejoice in what He says is good, beautiful and true.

Where did I come from? I came from the very mind and act of God. Why am I here? I am here to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever and that's why He created me. That is also why He saved you and sustained you too. Where does it start? He made you for His glory. You in measure reveal His majesty in a creation that shouts His glory and He put you over it. The very first one He created, He came, the Incarnate presence, I don't know how, but He would come in the cool of the evening that Adam and Eve could enjoy Him forever. He didn't make them to die. I didn't put anything in here about death because that was not a part of creation but we'll get to that in the next study for that's the fall. He made them in His image forever.

Have you ever wondered why Christians when they get to the end of their life fight for life, even though we know where we're headed is better for there is no fear there? It is because God made you to live forever. He didn't make you to die and that's why your reflex is to live. That's why He tells you even though you said 'I want death and not life' in Adam, then we live out that sin nature everyday telling God we want death rather than life. God loves you and He gave His Son. Truly, truly he who believes in Me has eternal life. That's why Jesus said 'I make all things new.' I put it back in place, in Me but you can't appreciate it or be amazed by it until we understand creation, then grace becomes much more amazing when we understand the fall. In our next study we'll see just how amazing grace is. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Lord, I know there is so much more we could learn about this first plank of creation in our world and life view but at least we have been able to get our arms around it to some degree. Now Father, we are going to move on to understand what went wrong in creation, in the fall of humanity and the sin. Then we will learn about the glory and majesty of redemption where we can be right with God by Your grace and Your mercy. Then we'll see the amazing, sustaining hand of God in this world for believers and unbelievers in Your common grace and Your redeeming grace in Providence. Then where are we headed? Father, I'm looking so much forward to those studies of heaven. Father, help us keep putting this together step by step. We don't have a world that is giving it to us but we have a world that wants to put us on our heels. Father, put us on our toes that we can think rightly and that we can live the heart of Christ because we have the mind of Christ for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

To live a faithful and effective Christian LifeStyle, a Christian must develop a Christ-centered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled LifeView propelled by a Christ-consumed LifeLove saturated by persistent prayer. *LifeLove – LifeView – LifeStyle*

FOUR FRAMING QUESTIONS

- I. Why is there something rather than nothing?
- II. Why are some things right and other things wrong?
- III. What things are right and what things are wrong?
- IV. Who or What determines the things that are right and the things that are wrong?

THEOLOGY – ANTHROPOLOGY – EPISTEMOLOGY – SOTERIOLOGY – ESCHATALOGY

FOUR PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- I. Who am I?
- II. Where did I come from?
- III. Why am I here?
- IV. Where am I going?

THE ESSENTIAL FRAMEWORK OF A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

CREATION - FALL-REDEMPTION - PROVIDENCE - CONSUMATION

THE ESSENTIAL FRAMEWORK OF A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

CREATION

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth.

ESSENTIALS OF THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

- I. Ex-Nihilo
- II. Historical Adam and Eve
- III. Covenant of Creation/Works
- IV. Federal Headship of Christ
- V. Creation Ordinances

Work-Rest-Marriage/Family-Sabbath/Week-Sexuality

STARTING TO ANSWER LIFEVIEW QUESTIONS FROM THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

- 1. Reveals/Light
- 2. Omnipotent–Almighty
- 3. Omniscient–All Wise
- 4. Omnipresent–Infinite
- 5. Eternal

- 6. Transcendent
- 7. Immanent
- 8. Sufficient
- 9. Righteous/Just 10. Sovereign