

God, Creation and Eternity: Comparative Views

Most worldviews can be classified as either naturalism, monism, or theism.

Naturalism (e.g. atheism) holds that nothing exists except matter and energy. We are the result of the blind forces of nature, and must define our own morality and purpose.

Monism (includes Hinduism and New Age spiritualism) holds that every person, animal, and object is united together by an impersonal force or power. The distinctiveness between different people and objects is only an illusion, so the purpose of life is to become fully reunited with the unifying power.

Theism (e.g. Christianity, Judaism) is the belief that everything was created by an all-powerful, personal God, and that God is distinct from (transcendence), yet intimately involved with, His creation (immanence). Knowing and following God is the purpose of life.

Below is a table summarizing these belief systems.

Basic Worldview Comparison

Topic	Naturalism	Monism	Theism
God	God does not exist	Impersonal	Personal God
People	An accident of nature	Part of "the force"	Created by God
Purpose	No objective purpose in live	Reunite with impersonal force	Know, serve, and enjoy God
Problem	Ignorance, superstition	Blind to one's own "divine nature"	Rebellion against Creator
Savior	Science, reason	Power within self	God is Redeemer
Afterlife	None	Reincarnation and union with "the force."	Heaven or hell

Review:

1. Is the spiritual world just as real as the natural world?
2. According to Scripture, are heaven and hell real places?
3. Describe the differences between Naturalism, Monism, and Theism.

Evolution is a good example of that modern intelligence which, if it destroys anything, destroys itself.

-G. K. Chesterton

Creation: Natural & Spiritual Worlds

Study #10

Hebrews 11:3 says that “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” The Bible tells us that what we see in the world was not the result of random events, but that it was created by design. The creation account in Genesis speaks about how God created all of nature, including mankind. It also reveals that all of the earth is subject to man’s rule and stewardship.

The Spiritual World

Jesus, Paul and many biblical authors refer to the spiritual world (Acts 19; Ephesians 6; Colossians 1:16). This invisible world is just as real as the natural and visible world. Many things that occur in the natural world are dictated by what is happening in the spiritual world.

As Christians we are constantly living in the invisible world and are seated in “heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). The eyes of our hearts must be opened (Ephesians 1:17-18) so that we too can see, experience, and take authority over things in the spirit world (Luke 10:17-19).

Heaven

“The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men...” (Psalm 14:2)

Thus says the Lord, “Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.” (Isaiah 66:1)

“He will send from heaven and save me...” (Psalm 57:3)

Heaven is described in the Bible as a place of God’s throne, His presence, His angels, and the reward of His followers.

Hell

“...hell, the unquenchable fire.” (Mark 9:43)

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment...” (2 Peter 2:4)

Hell is described in the Bible as the realm from which satan and his servants operate, and as a place of everlasting torment for those who reject God, both fallen humans and fallen angels (i.e. demons). It has many descriptions, but can be summed up as a place where one is totally separated from God and His goodness.

Angels

Angels are beings created by God before the earth was created. The Psalmist speaks of them thusly: “Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!” (Psalm 103:20). In Bible references to them, they are shown in the form of men or creatures. They praise God, and are messengers of His will (Hebrews 1:14). Angels that fell from God’s favor through rebellion are called demons, evil beings which effect the will of satan.

Fallen Angels: Satan and Demons

Satan (which means “adversary”) is called the Liar, Murderer, Deceiver, Thief, etc. (John 8:44, 10:10) All demons are subservient spirits to satan. They are organized (Ephesians 6:12) and can deceive people, representing themselves as good (2 Corinthians 11:14). Until these demons and satan are removed, God’s children will face spiritual opposition and warfare. As God’s children, we are called to live in Christ’s victory over the enemy through the abundance of Christ’s grace and power (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9; 1 John 4:4).

Note on “Heavenly Places” and the Physical World

In Ephesians 6:12, it says, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but...against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” This verse provides us with a picture of the supernatural world. According to the Bible, heaven and hell are separate from the physical world, but there nevertheless exists interaction between spiritual beings and our physical world. Jesus repeatedly combats the influence of demons in people’s lives (e.g. Matthew 4:24, 12:22; Luke 4:35, 11:14). Daniel was helped by an angel who was sent by God as a response to his prayers. This angel had been delayed by the resistance of a demon (Daniel 10:13). And angels appear to God’s people many times in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g. Genesis 16:7; Exodus 3:2; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:28; Revelation (throughout)).

We can look around us and see the beauty that could only come from intelligent design, and we can witness the fingerprint of God in man’s conscience. These and many other elements of nature point to a divine Creator. Nevertheless, it is still “by faith” that “we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God...” (Hebrews 3:1).

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