

“WITH”: REIMAGINING THE WAY YOU RELATE TO GOD

A STUDY OF “WITH” BY SKYE JETHANI

LESSON 2: A LIFE UNDER GOD

I. Introduction

Consider religion in its simplest form: It is “the way people participated in maintaining the universe and their own survival.” To help mankind believe that “we are” more than passive victims of chance, “we” have used:

- A. Elaborate systems of superstition and rituals focused on natural forces. (weather, life cycles, animal behaviors etc): linked to laws of “mother nature”
- B. Developed detailed, sophisticated and frameworks of “gods”
 - 1. Greek gods (Olympian deities, titans, giants, sea deities, agricultural deities, etc.)
 - 2. Roman gods

Understanding the universe’s “blessings and curses” we became linked to the will of the gods.

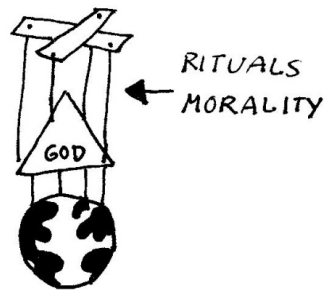
- C. Sought answers in the laws of science through: Our understanding of how things work, we became linked to the laws of physics, chemistry, astronomy, etc.
- D. Relied on human will: arrogantly we have linked success and failure to the power and strength of an individual’s perspective and determination.
- E. All these efforts were pursued as “a way of understanding and controlling otherwise unpredictable forces.” If we are in control, we do not need to be bantered around by our fears.

Remember, “life after Eden”: we were not content to rule with God, mankind wanted to be in a position of control and authority of God and the universe.

II. Life Under God

This life style wants to put God in our debt and expect Him to perform (in exchange for our religious behavior) in a more predictable manner.

- A. Characteristics of life under God
 - 1. The use of rituals, performance and spiritual bartering attempts to control God.



2. It's a moral "quid pro quo"
 - a. If I pray...God has to bless
 - b. If I give...God will bless
 - c. If I obey...God looks good and will reward me
3. This false sense of "control" gives a degree of predictability to life and thus "reduces" the impact from our fears.
4. This posture puts an incredible focus on externals rather than internal character on true motivation.

Consider Jesus' tirade at the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23

B. Limitations of life under God

1. It does not actually remove our fears – it adds to them. "It simply makes us afraid of God and not just His creation." (p. 31).
2. It does not remove burdens, it adds to them.
3. It does not reconnect us to God Himself. It just provides an equation for seeking blessings. See Isa. 28:10-13 and 29:13.

C. The impact of life under God for teenagers

- D. The impact of life under God for modern society. We conclude that "religion is more destructive than a benign force in the world." (p. 35)

III. Conclusion

Life with God does not guarantee blessings nor the absence of pain.

- A. "Good and not so good" both come from God. See Lam. 3:38 and Ecc. 7:14
- B. Good, godly people suffer. See 1 Pet. 4:12-13
- C. The suffering (or its absence) is not an indication of the favor of God. We live in a fallen world and the effects of the fall (Gen. 3) are everywhere. (Until the new heaven and new earth – Rev. 21)
- D. God reserved the right to give and take away. See Job 1:21, 2:10

-
- E. The source or nature of our suffering should not be our focus. God is worthy of our praise (regardless of His unresponsiveness to our “demands.”)
 - F. Consider the blind man in John 8.
“...but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” (Jn. 8:3)
 - G. Bottom line:
 - 1. He promises to never leave us. See Ps. 23:4 “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”
 - 2. He requires a certain attitude. Job 23:9-11 “When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside.”

Discussion Questions

- 1. How do you respond to things that are unpredictable? What is your “default” reaction? How do you try to control things?
- 2. Why was Jesus so angry with the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23? How do 21st century Christians mirror those same attitudes? Why is that dangerous for our kids and society as a whole?
- 3. Have you been guilty of bartering with God? In reality, what does God “owe” you? What does He promise you?