

Ministering To Today's Cultures

Today's society has been labelled as "*postmodern*" or better still "*post-secular*" in culture.

"Post-secular" illustrates the fact that the new culture is no longer looking exclusively to scientific data to answer the questions of life.

There is a significant shift towards non-quantifiable or non-verifiable spiritual answers to the questions in life.

The working definition of this culture is taken to be as follows –

"A learned, shared and integrated system of values, beliefs and assumptions for understanding, coping with and relating to the world, which results in the behaviour that is characteristic of a group of people."

If Christians are to succeed in transferring our faith to this group of people who are completely and elementally different at many levels, we need to understand their culture.

Each culture has its own worldview, or fundamental way of looking at things, so it means that such people will only understand the gospel message from the perspective of their own worldview.

Even though we mean and understand what we are saying, will these post-secular people understand what we mean if we are insensitive to their values, beliefs and assumptions, that drive their worldview?

What must be done to reach these "*strangers in our familiar Christian land?*"

Jesus Christ did not say "*go into all the world and make disciples unless you find it too difficult.*"

Matthew 28:18-20 [New King James] *"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."*

Note the power to accomplish this task in any age centres on Jesus Christ.

Because of this command from our Saviour and Lord we are constrained to find a way of showing that the Christian gospel message is relevant in a worldview where absolute truth is looked on as impossible and relativism is an absolute truth.

When we look at the viewpoint of life from a Christian stance, where God's Word, the Christian Bible, and Jesus Christ in Person are absolute truth, such a belief that the post-secular people have looks to be foolish.

Two scriptural truths must be considered before we tackle what seems to be a mountainous task –

John 6:44 [New King James] *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

In God's plan for all humanity not every human being is going to have their chance for salvation at this time.

1 Corinthians 3:5-8 [New King James] *“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, **but God gave the increase.** So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour.”*

Our work of preaching the gospel message as Christians and making disciples of Jesus Christ, is limited to planting and watering, only God can give the increase.

This increase is the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune Godhead, [**John 16:8**].

To tackle this problem of preaching the gospel message that is founded on absolute truth we need to address two things –

- 1) **Analysis of the postmodern/post-secular culture.**
- 2) **Find ways to make the eternal truth of the gospel message relevant within the existing structure of today’s culture.**

We need to re-examine our own Christian values, beliefs and assumptions concerning the nature of eternal, absolute truth in order to look at post-secularism in as objective light as is possible **given the human condition.**

What do I mean by “human condition”?

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 [New King James] *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

Satan, the god of this world, [1 John 5:19] has blinded the vast majority of people to the true gospel message.

We therefore must never condemn people influenced by the post-secularism as heretics only people still in the grip of Satan’s deception.

Even though we know what we mean by what we say, can post-secular people understand what we mean if we are insensitive to the values, beliefs and assumptions that they have?

It is similar to wanting a non-English speaking person to understand and accept a presentation of the gospel message in the English language.

The post-secularist says that absolute truth either does not exist or it is essentially unknowable.

They believe that every person’s thought circle, no matter how big or how small, shall contain truth, but it cannot define all truth.

This leads to the assumption that truth being too vast to be knowable, then God Himself is unknowable.

In the pre-modern era, which encompasses most of human history, when the prophets proclaimed that they brought a message from God, it was accepted or rejected not on independent verification through rational examination of the claims of the prophet but rather on the relationship with God that was perceived to exist in the life of the prophet and on the relationship with God that was felt to exist in the lives of the recipients.

Modernists assert that mysticism is simply not rational and thereby render it unworthy of examination.

The postmodernist reacts to this limitation of rationalism by placing a far greater emphasis on statements that assert “*I perceive*” or “*I have logically concluded*” thus making truth subject to humans rather than humans subject to truth.

The basic dilemma that results in these diametrically opposed positions is the nature of truth and humanity’s ability to define that truth and the aggressive defence of those definitions.

The modernist’s definition of truth is so highly systematised that it seeks to limit God’s ability to interact with human beings.

When people say that God speaks to humans in this age only through the text of scripture they, unintentionally perhaps, strip the Holy Spirit of a major portion of His ministry in this age.

Yet when the postmodernist claims that only those “*truths*” that are received through supernatural experience have relevance and take precedence over those of the text, they are limiting the work of the Holy Spirit.

The postmodernist seems to assert that the only truth that is knowable is the truth that states there is no absolute truth.

This is rejecting Christianity as the centre of truth, when it is based on God’s Word, the Christian Bible, that is inspired by Holy Spirit [2 Timothy 3:16].

The postmodernists place God at the centre but see Christianity as one of many ways of thinking about God.

Thus Jesus Christ is put into the same category as Mohammed, Buddha and Vishnu, they become merely different expressions of the same unknowable God.

The problem facing the Christian church in this postmodern is how can we have lives that are faithful to the great commission and the great commandment and at the same time avoid being viewed as intolerant?

The answer is that we cannot.

We were warned by Jesus Christ that His disciples would be hated by all people, just as they hated Him, [John 15:18-21].

Yet it is the very person and words of Jesus Christ that is the unadulterated truth.

John 1:17-18 [New King James] *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”*

It is Jesus Christ who brought the truth to humanity.

John 8:32 [New King James] *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

Free from the penalty of death but also the deception of Satan who blinds this world to the truth and spreads lies, [**2 Corinthians 4:4; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Revelation 12:9**].

When we stick to God’s Word, the Christian Bible, [**John 17:17**] and follow Jesus Christ who is the truth, [**John 14:6**] knowing what is true is obvious to every person whom God is calling at this time, [**John 6:44**].

Romans 8:28-30 [New King James] *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*

All whom God is calling at this time will be blessed by being among the “firstfruits” of God’s Kingdom, [James 1:18].

Romans 8:29 [New King James] *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

This indicates that this group of “firstfruits” will be small compared with the final “harvest.”

The terms used by Paul go back to the Old Testament and the two harvests in the Middle East, which were linked to the Festivals and Holy Days given to Israel by God to depict the complete plan of God for all humanity.

[Please download and study the article ‘God-Ordained Christian Festivals And Holy Days’ listed under sub-heading ‘Covenants’.]

The end goal that the Creator God has is that all will come to repentance and He will be able to offer them salvation from death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:9-14 [New King James] *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;”*

The Day of the Lord refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, this time as world ruler.

1 Peter 1:16-19 [New King James] *“because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Redeemed, brought back from deserved death, by the sacrificial blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 [New King James] *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

This salvation is **only** through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:15-16 [New King James] *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”*

Every true Christian must be well informed as to what they believe, based on God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

If people will **not** accept the Truth, that is Jesus Christ and His Words as recorded in the Christian Bible, then their time for salvation is **not** now.

Revelation 20:4-6 [New King James] *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*

Even after the Second Coming only a limited number will be offered salvation and understand the truth.

Revelation 20:11-13 [New King James] *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.”*

This is when the vast majority of all humans who have existed will have the Truth, God’s Word, [“books were opened”] given to them for the first time.

Also salvation will be offered to them through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a substitute to their own deserved death, [Romans 6:23].

Both postmodern and post-secular or any culture will not matter then.