

What in the World? Episode 4

Welcome back to our What in the World? series! We've had a little break from this as we returned to apologetics and took a short sidestep to review Halloween, which you should absolutely go and check out.

So, we're taking a little break from this stuff to let your brain rest and reset, and we're once again taking a look at the news each week and trying to apply the Christian worldview to it! We also have our now recurring spot at the end of the episode, 'Playing the Trump Card', where we review at any news relating to Trump.

Always a good laugh.

So, the big news this week is, obviously, more COVID lockdowns.

One thing we have to look at is the fact that [the government have ordered places of worship to close again](#). This means synagogues, cathedrals, mosques and, yes, churches like ours.

I think there comes a point where we have to consider how much power the government has, and how happy God would be with His people being told they can't meet.

When it happened in China, I doubt He was best pleased about it.

Admittedly, we wouldn't be killed for doing it if we *were* to break the rules, but still, the point is the same in principal.

Let me explain the difficult position the church finds itself in. We have two different responses to these lockdowns that we find in the Bible:

1. We obey God rather than men – when the apostles in Acts are told by the governing authority they aren't allowed to gather and aren't allowed to preach Jesus' name and salvation, they respond "no thanks, bro – we're going to preach because we obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)
2. We have to be subject to the ruling authorities as God puts them in place – we're told in several places in the Bible that God puts the emperors, governors, rulers, etc. in place for our good. Therefore, we should obey them. Here's a couple of places we see this:
 - a. Romans 13:1-7 – *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.*
 - b. 1 Peter 2:13-17 – *"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."*

So, the problem we have is where do we fall between these two? On the one hand, we obviously should obey God over and above men. That's why there's so many heroic stories of people in communist dictatorships refusing to bend the knee to the government and continuing to praise Jesus as Lord despite the risk of death for doing so.

On the other hand, we're told to obey our authorities and leaders...

The issue lies in when does it become okay to disobey authorities to ensure you're obeying God?

For me, it becomes when the government is no longer punishing those who do evil, praising those who do good, being a terror to people's bad conduct, carrying out justice and God's wrath.

Do we feel we're in that place now?

As uncomfortable as it is to be told not to meet, we're not being told not to *worship*. That's the big difference here, to my mind.

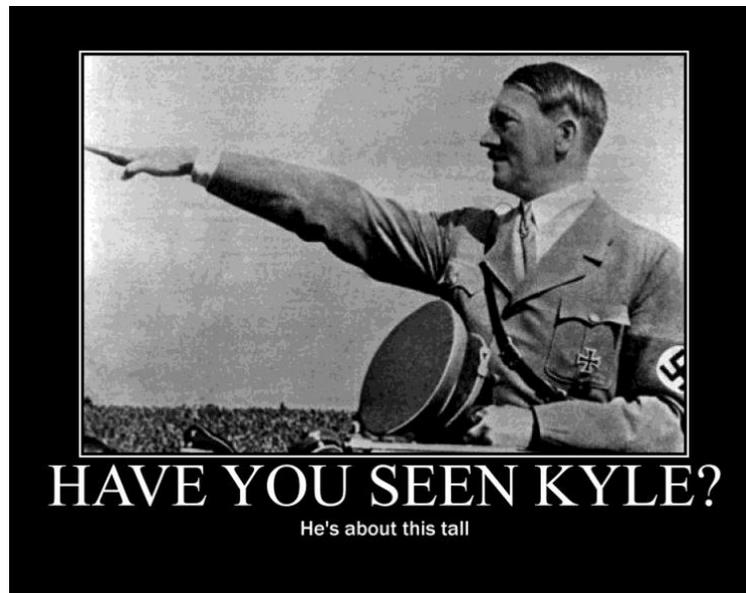
Whilst I may have some reservations about how things are handled, I can't make the case that they're stopping Christians worshipping or telling us we can't be Christians.

So, for now, we can practice what we spoke about on Sunday – we can obey.

Now, in the episode I said in the companion, we'd discuss some more about things like "if God made the governments and puts leaders in place, does that include Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pott, and all those?"

So, let's do that now!

Did God put Hitler in place? Or Stalin? Or Lenin? etc.



I doubt this is a direct quote but it lightens the mood, doesn't it?

If we go off the Biblical data, we find ourselves having to say "yes, God determined that they would be in-place and would do the things they did, by His decree".

Now, that feels a little tough to say, so let's think around this some more, shall we?

When someone says "God caused this", there's a couple of different things that could be meant:

1. God determined it (meaning He caused it)

2. God allowed it (meaning He didn't prevent it)
3. God ordained it (meaning He allowed it ahead of time)

Let's look at each and see how they fit into what we know of God and His attributes, alongside our Biblical data.

God Determines

This is the idea that God causes everything. He decided, ahead of time, what would happen, and people have no ability to diverge from this.

Whilst the good side of this is that it keeps God's sovereignty in-tact, and shows his omnipotence, it doesn't mesh well in other areas.

For example, as we know from James 1:13 (*"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."*) God has nothing to do with sin, it is anathema to Him. However, on this view, God is the *author* of sin. That means God created and causes sin.

This can't possibly be a part of God and His attributes, because we know He is perfectly good and holy.

This is also the major kick in the pants of Calvinism, if you recall back to our series on Jesus, Atonement and Salvation.

Additionally, this removes human free will, which is not only abhorrent as it makes God a bit of a monster, but it also isn't what we experience on a day to day basis. It's far harder to argue that free will doesn't exist than does!

God Allows

This is the idea that God sees what is to come and allows it to happen, vis a vis He doesn't actively stop something happening if He doesn't want to.

What do we make of this?

Well, this makes God seem a little hands-off, like the view of Arminianism. It's not that He's actively involved, causing or preventing things happening, it's just a hand-off, laissez-faire method of things. This doesn't mesh well at all with what we see in the Bible, of an interested, personal God, who sends His son to intervene and save.

Additionally, on this view, sovereignty takes a bit of a hit – God doesn't actually seem to be in any sort of control, even though the idea He didn't actively prevent something happening would imply He could if He wanted to.

The plus side, I suppose, is it really affirms free will, which is *incredibly* difficult to argue against.

God Ordains

This choice is an odd one that requires some mental gymnastics.

The idea of something being *ordained* is for God to look through the corridor of time, see what would be done by humanity, and decide that should happen. That means it has been ordained.

If God did not want something to happen, it would not be ordained, and would therefore not happen. See?

The easiest way to reconcile this with what we know about God is with the doctrine of middle knowledge, which I have 100% banged-on about extensively before.

On middle knowledge, God knows any and all counter-factuals (if... then.. statements, such

as “if I were to win the lottery, then I would buy a Ferrari”) perfectly. With that knowledge, God knows what every single person would do, perfectly, in any given situation, whether or not it ever actually comes to pass. Even if it doesn’t, then He still knows it perfectly.



The ghost of Christmas yet to come from A Christmas Carol (this is the Muppets version, taking a selfie with Michael Caine) is a great example of middle knowledge

On this subject, then, God would know every choice that certain people (including Hitler) would make in any given situation, and then what others would freely do in reaction to this. The question then becomes – would God know if:

- a. Hitler would, in any situation, freely choose *any other* option than genocide etc.
- b. There would be a morally-sufficient reason for allowing this mass suffering

On the first point, similarly to how we discussed the idea of feasible worlds in our study of the problem of evil and suffering, there might not be a feasible world God could create in which Hitler chose, freely, not to commit the atrocities He did. It might be the case that this world was actually the *least* of the atrocities he would commit, freely. It might be the case that the only way to avoid the suffering and evil he perpetrated was for God to remove his free will... but would God do that? I would argue not – turning someone into a puppet is not loving or just.

On the second point, we can continue the above idea of the possibility of Hitler potentially being even worse when we look at God’s justifiable, or morally-sufficient, reasons for allowing the evil to happen. This evil might have been permissible in so far as there was no option of less evil.

Additionally, I wonder, how many people found faith because of the hate and evil that the Nazi party represented? If you think, there might be thousands upon thousands of people in Heaven right now who chose Jesus purely out of their response to the Nazi party and Hitler’s life.

Don’t forget, the ultimate purpose of our lives isn’t to be happy or anything like that, it’s to know and be reconciled to God.

You could make the argument that horrific acts can be out-weighted by the good that is done if, in response, more people come to know Christ.

Now, you can choose any of these explanations you like!

As a bit of a philosophy nerd myself, I like option 3, but it’s a very elementary explanation so I could see why you might not be compelled simply from this one short paragraph.

Back to the episode.

So, here's some sort of heart-warming-if-you-don't-think-too-hard-about-it news!
A police officer, a one PC Claire Bond, has been [given the Pride of Britain Award](#) after she was run over attempting to stop a drug dealer fleeing arrest in their car.

She literally got in the way of a reversing car in an attempt to grab his keys and stop him evading arrest.

She deserves the Pride of Britain award, what an amazing lady!

See, this is what the Bible talks about when it says authorities should be a terror to bad conduct – that dude sells drugs, likely to people under-18 as that is a common tactic to get people hooked, and was driving without a license fleeing arrest. That's quite the rap sheet, frankly.

As Christians, we should 100% be behind justice! God is a God of justice (Isaiah 30:18 says *"for the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him"*), and we should be praising any time justice is done.

This lady suffered some pretty bad injuries, with the doctors barely saving her leg by all accounts, and said she still wants to get back to policing as soon as possible.

She's an inspiration.

We recently have talked a lot about being disciplined, about being deliberate in preparation, about being diligent, about labouring gladly – this officer has it all! What an inspiration.

Let's all pray she has a speedy recovery and gets back to putting drug lords behind bars as soon as possible.

So, this brings us to our regular segment – playing our Trump Card!

Last time we looked at Trump's nomination for a nobel peace prize, this week we have an interesting story regarding the election! Obviously, at the point of writing this, the election hasn't happened yet.

But anyway, we have two things to look at here!

The first is just [a fun article](#) exploring the things Trump has said about various countries.

Let's have a laugh and review some of them.

Nothing overly-exciting about the UK – he wasn't a great fan of Theresa May, frankly, but he likes Boris! Additionally, he's a big fan of Brexit!

But he also called Sadiq Khan a 'stone cold loser' which, whilst hilarious, isn't particularly honouring.



"He what?"

North Korea – so, he’s called Chairman Kim ‘Rocket Man’, which is hilarious but suffers from the same issue as Sadiq Khan, but aside from that he was the first sitting president to ever set foot in North Korea and has had several meetings about demilitarizing Korea. That’s amazing, right? That’s such an incredible geo-political step forward!

Just for a laugh, let’s look at what he’s said about France. A little while ago he called Mr Macron "foolish" when France moved to introduce a tax on US technology companies and threatened to add a tax on French wine as retaliation, tweeting: "I've always said American wine is better than French wine!" (Mr Macron put the new tax on hold). Quite a bold statement.



"A bold flavour, sir. A BOLD flavour"

French wine is worse than American wine? That’s just hilarious! I don’t care about the taxes right now, it’s been beaten down by the idea that the French, the most famous and impressive and revered country in wine-making history, is worse than the US, which really only has California as a recognised place to get great wine. Unbelievable.

To put the Christian worldview on this (calling people names, not wine – the Jewish version of wine is famously bad) – we have to accept that Trump has done some good things here. He’s moved closer to unity across countries, particularly with ensuring there is justice for rogue countries, which is ace. However, he really isn’t very honouring of other people. There’s little effort to recognise other people as bearing the image and likeness of God, or using honouring language. He called Macron foolish, but here’s what Jesus says about this in

Matthew 5:22 – *“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”*

So, I’m not scorning him, I’m reserving opinion, but we can look at this as Christians and see what we think about what’s going on.

Let’s take a look at another interesting story, still Trump Card-related.

We have here [an article](#) about a Democrat and a Republican who are making their marriage work, despite the fact they believe *completely different things*.

What do we think of that, then?

I’ll bet many people will say “well, variety is the spice of life” or “opposites attract, eh?” or even “well if one is on the left and one is on the right then they’ll find a nice middle ground!”

I’m sure some of that is true, but let’s consider the idea of being diametrically opposed in how you view the world and its realities.

Does the Bible say anything about this?

2 Corinthians 6:14 says *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”*

Now, I’m not talking about politics anymore, I’m talking about seeing the world completely differently, I’ve used it as a way to pivot to a Christian perspective – clever, eh?

Here is the biggest issue I see with Christians and non-Christians dating and marrying, and it’s *why* we, Christians and youth leaders like me, always say don’t date a non-Christian!

We see the world differently. We have a completely different idea of how things work. We have different priorities. We have different methods of resolving things.

We’re so different.

Example: One person believes sex before marriage is wrong, the other doesn’t. Is that going to go well for you in your dating life? Probably not. Is the other person going to honour your wishes to refrain from sexual activity if they don’t see it as a problem? Unlikely.

Then what about in marriage? If they have a sexual history and you don’t this causes all sorts of issues mentally and physically, not to mention that statistically this increases the likelihood of divorce.

Then when you’re raising kids and they become teens, what are you guys going to tell them about relationships?

It’s a nightmare.

I’m not saying you can’t disagree on things, Sam and I do fairly regularly, but we disagree on methods not principles. We see the world the same way, we just might take slightly different roads to get to the same end goal. Understand?

We’ve used loads of Bible this week, so no specific scripture of the week.

As always, don’t be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you’re up to and what you’re thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.

Speak to you next week!