

WEEK TWO DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

THIS WEEK

Book One, Chapters 4-5

In chapter 4-5, Lewis concludes his argument for absolute morality and begins to discuss how it points towards evidence of a Creator behind it all.

ASSESSING THE TEXT

"The Law of Human Nature, or of Right and Wrong, must be something above and beyond the actual facts of human behavior. In this case, besides the actual facts, you have something else – a real law which we did not invent and which we know we ought to obey (pg. 21)."

If we did not invent it, how does that impact the idea that morality can change? How does it impact current political and cultural debates?

"Science works by experiments. It watches how things behave. Every scientific statement in the long run, however complicated it looks, really means something like, 'I pointed the telescope to such and such a part of the sky at 2:20am on January 15th and saw so-and-so', or, 'I put some of this stuff in a pot and heated it to such-and-such a temperature and it did so-and-so (pg. 22).'"

What goes wrong when scientists try to make philosophical interpretations from their findings?

"But why anything comes to be there at all, and whether there is anything behind the things science observes – something of a different kind – this is not a scientific question. If there is 'Something Behind', then either it will have to remain altogether unknown to men or else make itself known in some different way. The statement that there is any such thing, and the statement that there is no such thing, are neither of them statements that science can make. And real scientists do not usually make them (pg. 23)."

Why is this point hard to accept by many people?

"There is one thing, and only one, in the whole universe which we know more about than we could learn from external observation. That one thing is Man. We do not merely observe men, we are men. In this case, we have, so to speak, ins ide information; we are in the know. And because of that, we know that men find themselves under a moral law, which they did not make, and cannot quite forget even when they try, and which they know they ought to obey (pg. 23)."

How is the reality of moral absolutes evidence that there is a God?

"Anyone studying Man from the outside as we study electricity or cabbages, not knowing our language and consequently not able to get any inside knowledge from us, but merely observing what we did, would never get the slightest evidence that we had this moral law. How could he? For his observations would only show what we did, and the moral law is about what we ought to do. In the same way, if there were anything above or beyond the observed facts in the case of stones or the weather, we, by studying them from the outside, could never hope to discover it (pg. 23-24)."

Do you think Lewis' point here is valid? Why or why not?

"If there is a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe - no more than the architect of a house could actually be a wall or staircase or fireplace inside that house. The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves (pg. 24)."

How does this support or contradict Scripture's claims of man? (Hint: Check out Genesis 1:26-27)

"We have two bits of evidence about the Somebody. One is the universe He has made. If we used that as our only clue, then I think we should have to conclude that He was a great artists (for the universe is a very beautiful place), but also that He is quite merciless and no friend to man (for the universe is a very dangerous and terrifying place). The other bit of evidence is that Moral Law which He has put into our minds. And this is a better bit of evidence than the other, because it is inside information. You find out more about God from the Moral Law than from the universe in general just as you find out more about a man by listening to his conversation than by looking at a house he has built (pg. 29)."

Do you agree or disagree with Lewis referring to God as merciless? Why do we often forget about the power of God in our theology?

"Of course, I quite agree that the Christian religion is, in the long run, a thing of unspeakable comfort. But it does not begin in comfort; it begins in the dismay I have been describing, and it is no use at all trying to go on that comfort without first going through that dismay (pg. 32)."

Do you think we talk enough about the "bad news" of the Gospel? Too much?

BRINGING IT HOME

How does this section of the book better help you defend the principles of Christianity?

How can others in the group pray for you?

Who in your life can the group pray for that might need to hear this message?