

An expanded ‘Romans Road’ for the 21st Century

An adaptation from *How to Share the Gospel in a Post-Christian Culture*, by Jay Wegter

God is Creator, Owner, Sustainer, Lawgiver, Definer, Redeemer, and Judge. His relationship to what He has made constitutes ultimate reality.

Cosmology is that branch of philosophy which deals with the origin and structure of the universe. At the heart of biblical cosmology is the Creator’s relation to the cosmos, and the Creator-creature distinction. Biblical cosmology includes man as the image of God (with the sub-themes of male and female, the dominion mandate, and biblical anthropology).ⁱ

Central to biblical cosmology is that God is Creator and ‘Definer’ of what He has made. God as Creator gives *designations, definitions, categories and relations* of what He has made. God creates the distinctions and gives instructions and commands governing the relations between those distinctions (i.e. Creator and creation, man and woman, parent and child, human and animal, animals and plant) (See Ps 33; Jn 1:1-5; Col 1:15-19; Heb 1:1-3).ⁱⁱ

Here are just a few of the indicators that we live in a ‘post-Christian’ world.

As the Western world has lost the Creator-creature distinction so also it has increasingly been discarding antithesis (that truth and error are mutually exclusive). Our culture has bought into vogue the *synthesis concept* of truth whenever it serves its purpose. The *synthesis concept* of truth allows for contradictory ideas to be ‘harmonized’—for example: believing in the gospel and in reincarnation at the same time. David Wells refers to this loss of antithesis as the rejection of *the correspondence view of truth*.

The correspondence view of truth holds that statements about reality that are true reflect and correspond to what is there. In other words, for a statement to be true it means that there is no external reality that nullifies the statement. In a true statement, the words *correspond* to what is there. For example, if I say, “The dog is on the lawn.” You may look out the window to the yard to determine the truthfulness of my statement.ⁱⁱⁱ

Biblical revelation gives us an accurate account of reality, a truthful and authoritative representation of what’s out there. The historic confession of the church has been as follows: biblical revelation gives an accurate account of what’s out there. Correspondence between Scripture and reality is secured by the fact that God Almighty has given it. God’s truth is unvarying and universal. God’s immutability guarantees that His Word is not open to change or to revision. God’s revelation sets up an *antithesis* with all that is untrue. God’s holiness sets up a contrast with all error and evil. God has precipitated a collision between His wisdom and the world’s spurious wisdom (see 1 Corinthians chapters 1-4).^{iv}

Christ and the Apostles continually utilized antithesis in their discourses and epistles. The

biblical concept of truth (antithesis) is that darkness and light are mutually exclusive (1 Jn 1:1-6). God cannot be both sovereign self-existent Creator and part of the universe.

Crass pragmatism has become the over-arching value for life's choices. By erasing the Creator-creature distinction, modern sinners place their own ideas above the Creator's infallible self-revelation. Having rejected biblical cosmology they are now 'free' to engage in self-worship (worshipping one's own mind, opinions, and passions—Romans 1:18-23; 2 Cor 10:3-5).

Why the need for a 21st C. 'Romans Road'? The church has been napping amidst this drift away from biblical cosmology. In the recent past, believers haven't had to make a full cosmological response to the unbeliever's objections, but now it is essential—for the cosmological base for the gospel is gone in our culture. Nothing can be taken for granted anymore—the Creator-creature distinction cannot be assumed in our dialog with the unchurched.^v

Unlike evangelism in the recent past, our struggle now involves a 'worldview clash.' The unbeliever's faulty worldview must 'collide' with the timeless truth that God is Creator, Upholder, Lawgiver, and Judge. It is only the Word of God that is capable of deconstructing the unbeliever's faulty worldview. This 'clash' between worldviews is necessary in today's world because knowledge has been privatized into personal opinions without absolute truth. Without authoritative absolute truth claims anchored in God's self-revelation, there can be no objective sin or evil—one is left with a domesticated God who does not judge, govern, or redeem.^{vi}

Biblical cosmology plays a central role in our evangelistic strategy. God the 'Definer' gives us the correct categories to define our world and to engage our world. The categories given by our Creator are necessary in order to deconstruct today's paganism (i.e. the worship of creation—Romans 1:25). Paul begins his epistle to the Romans with an analysis of pagan thinking. This is intensely relevant in our own world which has lost its biblical cosmology. We must understand the world into which we are called to speak the gospel.^{vii}

Remember, today's paganism seeks to erase the created boundaries God has made: the boundary between God and mankind, between man and animal, between good and evil, and between man and woman. War on these God-ordained distinctions constitutes war on God Himself who is the distinction Maker.

Biblical cosmology offers and preaches antithesis in a world of synthesis. Only biblical cosmology is theologically robust enough to expose and oppose the march of neo-paganism (the new paganism). If we are to check the advance of neo-paganism, the 'cosmology bomb' has to hit.^{viii} Our wedge point, our fulcrum is biblical cosmology—God's relation to what He has made—Creator, Owner, Sustainer, Definer. This is certainly how Paul preached in Acts 17:16-31 when he addressed highly educated but biblically illiterate listeners.

An expanded ‘Romans Road’ evangelistic presentation for the 21st C.
The following references from the book of Romans form a kind of ‘road’ in presenting the gospel. Next to each passage below is the summary thought.

- 1. 1:18-23 -- All men know that God is Almighty Creator, yet they studiously suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness which exposes them to His wrath.**
- 2. 2:1-9 – All men make moral judgments about the ethical failures of others, yet they themselves fail to repent of personal sin.**
- 3. 2:12-16 -- All men have God’s standard written upon the conscience. They constantly make ethical judgments about their own behavior and motives.**
- 4. 3:10-18 -- No one is righteous in God’s sight, no not even one individual.**
- 5. 3:19-20 -- No one will be saved by law-keeping; the law reveals sin, removes every alibi, and establishes the guilt of every person before God.**
- 6. 3:23 -- All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory. Mankind’s knowledge of God and His glory was forfeited by human sin.**
- 7. 3:24 – Right standing before God (justification) was purchased for believers by Christ’s obedience and substitutionary death upon the cross.**
- 8. 4:3-8 – God only justifies those who abandon all hope in their own righteousness.**
- 9. 5:12 -- Sin entered the race through one man and death to all because of sin.**
- 10. 5:8 – Man cannot contribute to his own salvation. Christ died for the helpless and the ungodly.**
- 11. 6:23 -- Death is what our sin deserves, but God gives eternal life in Christ as a free gift to those who believe the gospel and repent of sin.**
- 12. 10:9-10 -- With the heart man believes in the risen Christ resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses that Jesus is Lord, resulting in salvation.**

Conversational guidelines for the Romans Road presentation:

Regarding man’s suppression of the knowledge of God—people welcome the blinding that Satan performs (they want no revelation of God; or they desire a muddled, unclear, non-authoritative revelation of God—John 3:19-21; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:17-21).

Therefore, it is jarring and deeply disturbing for the sinner to discover that he is a ‘studious’ truth-suppressor (Rom 1:18-23). The God whom you know is Ruler of the universe. Sinners want a God of love, care, grace, and forgiveness, but they do not accept a God of justice. The conscience must be instructed concerning the character of God and educated with the standards of God’s Word—the moral Law of God is that instructional tool (Rom 2:1-16; 3:10-20).^{ix}

The conscience is a faculty of judgment given by God by which we examine our own behavior, motives, and decisions. The Bible says that the heart of man is the source of evil thoughts and deeds (Matt 7:20-23; 15:19-20; Gen 6:5). The conscience is God’s inner witness of our true thoughts and motives. God’s witness in the conscience alone is enough to condemn men, but not enough to save them apart from the gospel (Rom 2:1-16). The conscience is a ‘spy’ for God inside the soul of fallen man—a ‘spy’ that argues for the immutability of God’s moral law. Learn to use the law of God to speak to the conscience.

The cross of Christ is a monument to the fact that sinful man deserves to die and be separated from God. The cross humbles completely—the cross truly comprehended is the end of a person’s imagined autonomy, righteousness, and sovereignty (Phil 3:8-11). There is no salvation unless a person is convinced of the depth and seriousness of personal sin. There is no mercy unless a person trembles at God’s threats. The Spirit’s conviction reveals to a person the state of his or her heart before God. Christ came for the ‘sin sick’ (Mk 2:17). Christ came for the spiritually blind (Jn 9:39-41).

The rock-hard soil of the American pagan’s heart must be ‘cultivated’ before it is truly ready to receive the good seed of the gospel (Matt 13:23). God the Father ‘educates and teaches’ the unbeliever until he becomes sensible to his ruined state (Jn 6:45). Jesus warned about casting pearls before swine (Matt 7:6).

The Romans Road is a kind of map. There is no progress to the ‘destination’ if one does not fully acknowledge one’s present location (i.e. as a truth-suppressor, as unrighteous, a helpless sinner, etc.). Check along the way as you are sharing with the unbeliever—solicit feedback. Ask if he understands the consequences described in the passage—ask him to put it in his own words. Do not start with the gospel offer of forgiveness—educate the conscience until you detect some fear of God. Remember, irresponsibility before God goes with sinner-ship—sinners practice self-justification, self-deception, and flight from judgment. The unbeliever covers, defends, and excuses himself—true conviction hasn’t taken place until a person pronounces God’s verdict of judgment upon himself (Luke 18:13).

True evangelism includes an endeavor to elicit a response: “You have to face God whose laws you have violated.” “You have no ability to ‘cut a deal’ with God—only God can get you out of your predicament.” “I beseech you by the mercies of God to respond to what you have heard.” “It is because I care for you that I am telling you that you are in deep trouble.” “What will you do with the knowledge you have?” “Do you know what you are rejecting?”^x

The reception of the gospel must be a cognitive experience—its content must register upon the illumined intellect, heart, and conscience (Rom 10:8-10). The awakened sinner will not ameliorate his dilemma by a new set of resolutions. He must be shown that Christ Jesus alone is the life and has the life the sinner desperately needs. Salvation involves dealing with the Person of Christ Himself. The Puritans referred to this as “closing with Christ.”

By way of illustration: *Contrast true salvation with the common attitude of personal resolutions which often accompany the behavior of a person who has walked an aisle multiple times.* Conversion involves mind, heart, and will. The truths of the Gospel must be driven into the conscience of the sinner until he is no longer flattered by appeals to his self-interest. Only when the Spirit grants regeneration does the sinner equate a true conversion with knowing God. Then and only then is there an apprehension of, and affinity for, God’s holiness.^{xi}

Dear fellow evangelist, as a witness of Jesus Christ your own God-consciousness is of first importance. “If you do not have strong convictions about the reality of a sovereign God, the absolutes and finality of His laws, and our total dependency upon Him, it will be difficult to convince anyone else of God’s claims upon them.”^{xii}

“Thus you shall say to them, ‘The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens’” (Jer 10:11).

“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens” (Prov 3:19).

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host” (Ps 33:6).

Endnotes:

ⁱ Jay Wegter, “The Role of Biblical Cosmology in Evangelism,” 2007.

ⁱⁱ Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, p. 236.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Wells, *Above all Earthly Powers*, pp. 82-86.

^{iv} Ibid, pp. 88-114.

^v Peter Jones, “Forms of Paganism” (Escondido, CA: Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet, think-tank, 2007).

^{vi} D. A. Carson, “Reaching Postmoderns with the Gospel” (Minneapolis: Desiring God conference, 2006).

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Hal Farnsworth, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2008, Athens, Georgia.

^{ix} Steve Lonetti, “Evangelism,” The Master’s Seminary.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, pp. 172-182.

^{xii} C. J. Miller, *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1980) p. 114.