"*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him*" (Psalm 21:1 NLT).

"*… so you would know that the LORD is God and there is no other*" (Deuteronomy 4:35 NLT).

The Bible tells us that the reason we all operate this way is because we are all sinful people. And because most of us think, and live this way, we assume that this is simply the "natural" way to live. But though we think we are the centre of the universe, God's word, the Bible, says that this is not so! God is at the centre of the universe. The world is His: He created it and therefore He owns it. As Creator and Lord, God makes the rules about how His world operates, not us! Accordingly, as creatures made by God, it is not our prerogative to do as we please, or to live as we please. Nor can we plead ignorance, as if we do not know what God requires of us as His creatures i.e. He has written His moral code on our hearts. We all live in God's world as His guests, and under the bounty of His common grace to all mankind. At any time, God can bring things to an end and instigate the new heavens and earth that He has promised. We live as tenants who occupy this planet for a brief interlude of time, and during our short earthly sojourn, we each owe to God, our Landlord, and our Master, the responsibility to please and honour Him in all things!

These three cultural myths illustrate that "cultural truth" is a "million miles away" from God's truth i.e. if something is at variance with God's word of truth,



MYTHS BUSTED

the Bible, it is not truth, it is mere myth!

At the end of the day - and more importantly - at the end of human history, when Jesus Christ returns to judge both the living and the dead, the judgment of God - who is just and good - will be based on God's ultimate and authoritative truth, which God has already revealed to mankind in the Bible. At that time, the irrational but convenient cultural myths mankind prefers to set his hope and trust in, will be shown to be just so much dross! We human beings are living in a "fools paradise" believing (wrongly) that it is our prerogative to decide how we live our lives and what happens to us when we die. We are in for a serious reality check and desperately need to get right with God whilst God still gives us the opportunity to do so!

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that anyone who wishes to, can do so. God is patient and long-suffering. It is not His wish that any should perish, so He continues to lovingly give to His deceived human creatures the opportunity to get right with Him through Jesus Christ. The door to God's Heaven is still open, but one day it will be closed. God's patient forbearance is not eternal.

"*And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him*" (Deuteronomy 4:29 NLT).

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Cultural



Myths

"For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes"
(2 Peter1:16 NLT).

Introduction

"Cultural myths" are general ideas or beliefs that are held in common by most people within a population group, at a particular point in time. Cultural myths become so ingrained and familiar that they are assumed to be true.



Ongoing and periodic repetition reinforces this presumption. This brochure briefly examines a few myths that are currently popular NZ, and compare them with the truth God reveals in the Bible i.e. with the real situation.

Myth 1: Most people are good people.

Most of us believe that we are good people, or good neighbours, with good children, who all live in a good community, in a good country. "Good" has a range of meanings - "a good person" may mean someone who is helpful, or reliable/dependable, or positive, or welcoming, or likeable, or honest or enjoyable to be around etc. But "good" is also typically used in a moral sense to describe a person who "keeps the rules" (most of the time)! No-one thinks of themselves as being morally perfect, but we do like to believe that on average, our good actions more than offset our failures or shortcomings.

Any discussion about moral goodness must consider what is an appropriate standard for moral goodness 0……50……..100?

On a scale of goodness ranging from 0 (no goodness) - 100 (absolute goodness), most of us believe that if we score 50+, then we achieve a moral pass mark, i.e. we are a "good" person. Of course "50" is not a particularly exacting benchmark, but it is standard most of us are familiar with from school days where a grade of "50" is usually a pass mark. But consider a different example - someone who requires brain surgery. Now the expectation of the patient is that the surgeon will

"For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws" (James 2:10 NLT).

have achieved a higher standard than a pass mark of "50!" In this case, the patient hopes that the brain surgeon will be better than "good" and have the very best credentials possible! Why? Because your life might depend on it!

There are other human standards that operate in our culture e.g. the open road driving speed limit in many situations is 100kph. If a person is driving a vehicle at a speed greater than 100kph, they put themselves in a situation where, if they are caught "speeding," they will likely incur the penalty associated with this offence. Of course, if the offence is not detected by the enforcing authority, no penalty will be enforced, despite the fact that the driver has transgressed the speed law.

But we need to appreciate that human standards of moral goodness are not the same as God's standards. God's standards for His human creatures are very high! God created us morally excellent. His standard of moral goodness is "100!" Nor is it possible to transgress God's laws without God knowing, for God is infinite; He is present everywhere, and He knows everything! Every violation of God's law is serious to God, and as a result, human law breakers find themselves in a dire straits before a holy God i.e. every one of us has a lifelong record of accumulated law-breaking that one day we will have to give an account for before God!

Myth 2: God Will Accept Me Into His Heaven.

Though we rarely speak of death, everyone knows that one day, we all will also die. Death is a frightening prospect for many because it is rightly associated with so much uncertainty i.e. what happens to me after I die? But although we may prefer "not to go there" in our thinking, nevertheless death continues to be the unwanted endpoint of our physical lives - something that is common to all and utterly unavoidable.

To soften the harshness of death, and the fear of our accountability before God, our culture reinforces the following myth: ***God will accept me into His heaven because*** (based on the same logic as Myth 1) ***I am a good person.*** The rational for this belief is along the lines that God will "throw open the doorway of heaven" and warmly welcome me when I die because on balance, my good works out-weigh my evil works! Of course, this will not be the experience of everyone - really evil people (Hitler, Stalin etc) will be excluded, but for the rest of us, our welcome is practically guaranteed! As a result, people make comments about their deceased friends or relatives such as - *"they are looking down on us from on high."* But sadly this wistful hope and expectation is a misguided myth. Heaven belongs to God, just as the earth does. And God has established the entry requirements! It may be *our belief* that God evaluates our lives on a sliding moral scale but this is *not* the case! God's criteria to enter into *His* heaven are not being 50% moral, or 75% moral, or even 90% moral: God's standard is that a person must be 100% righteous to enter into His Heaven!

"No one is righteous - not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one … we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:10-12,23 NLT).

In the Bible God reveals that ***no one*** is going to get into His heaven based on their good moral lifestyle or their good works. And so, as with Myth 1, the reality is that every person "falls short" of God's standard, and thus every person is in a serious predicament before God!

Myth 3: The World Revolves Around Me

Most people live their lives as though "life is all about me!" We view ourselves as the hub at the centre of an old fashioned wheel made of wooden spokes! I am at the centre of my existence and my life is primarily about me, and what I want. As I look outwards from the hub to the external world beyond myself, my primary life motivation is to say, and to do, whatever I believe to be