



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Eclipse of God – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Erwin Lutzer

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. And in just a moment, we're going to hear part two of Gary Bauer's recent conversation with Dr. Erwin Lutzer talking about his brand new book called *The Eclipse of God*, which by the way is available as of today online or at your favorite bookstore.

Just click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk to reserve your copy. Dr. Erwin Lutzer is an international speaker, an award-winning author, and pastor emeritus of The Moody Church. He and his wife Rebecca have three grown children and eight grandchildren. Well, there's so much to get to. So without further ado, here once again is Gary Bauer and his guest, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, right here on Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Well, welcome back to Family Talk. We're really pleased today to be able to spend some more time with Dr. Erwin Lutzer about his new book, *The Eclipse of God*. It's a great read, a fantastic book. We got really immersed in it yesterday, but there's a lot more to talk about. So Doctor, thank you for being here and let's get right into it.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: Thank you so much, Gary. Privileged to be with you.

Gary Bauer: Doctor, I'm glad you brought up the immigration issue because it's one that I think there's a lot of confusion about in the church. When you or any of us speak up for the idea of a secure border, from the left we'll be labeled racists and bigots. That's the only reason we don't want people of color crossing our border. But in the church, some folks will say to us, our fellow believers, "Well, God loves migrants too, Gary. God loves immigrants too, and that's supposed to end the discussion or the debate."

Well, God loves taxpayers. God loves law abiders. That doesn't end the debate. In fact, it might give us a framework, but a nation that doesn't secure its borders

is actually failing to do one of the primary reasons that God created governments, which is to keep people safe.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer:

I don't want to keep going down this road too much farther, but I want to tell you this, that the people who advocate for open borders, if they live in a gated community and somebody came over the wall, they'd expect them to be arrested and all of us lock our doors, because we say to ourselves, "Even though I'm compassionate and loving, I'd like to know who comes into my home."

The border is actually our welcoming door. So we have a responsibility. Certainly we're all in favor of legal immigration, and yes, we should be compassionate. And the point to be made is this, and I don't want to create any controversy here that is unnecessary, but I want people to understand, the symbol of the government is the sword. The symbol of the church is the cross.

And what we cannot do is to do what one pastor said. Well, he said, "The gospel says whosoever will may come. Therefore, when it comes to the border, whosoever will may come." That is a false equivalent and you and I need to think through what the biblical point of view is. And so we have compassion for the world. I always say this and to all the critics out there who might be wondering where I'm going, the cross for me as a pastor always has to be above the flag.

When I die, I would like people to remember me as someone who loved the gospel, who preached the gospel to all people. At Moody Church, where I served on any given Sunday, and I'm sure that is still true today, we have people from 70 different countries of origin. And we rejoiced in that because the Book of Revelation says that before the throne there are going to be people from every tongue and nation.

And so we rejoice in that kind of unity. So let's make sure that we understand how the cross of Christ and the ministry of the gospel unites us. What is the great task of the church? Yes, to evangelize. Why is America and politics important? So that you can do the first task of the church. Recently, I was with Frank Turek who likes to say, "Have you ever noticed that there is not a first Baptist Church of North Korea?"

So important that we understand these issues. And I don't look to America as a savior. I don't look to a president as a savior. Absolutely not, but God has given us opportunities and we have to walk through those doors.

Gary Bauer:

Yes, we do. Not too long ago, all these missionaries we sent out around the world, not too long ago, I was in a airport in Louisiana and struck up a conversation with a couple of men from Africa. And in the course of the conversation, I asked them what brought them to America and they told me that they were missionaries and that they had come to America to spread the good news of the gospel.

And I thought to myself, what a wonderful way God works, that we set missionaries around the world and now we desperately need missionaries to come to us to speak to the church and to men and women of faith. Doctor, for a number of years under President Reagan, I had the honor of being undersecretary of education. I spoke at a lot of schools.

This is back in the '80s. And I found even back then in school visits that I was picking up a sense that the students just weren't being taught American history in any reasonable way. One day in one of those conversations with a senior class, I think it was a high school in a suburb of Minneapolis, I asked the class if they knew that America had been built on a profoundly religious idea, moral idea.

And I was referring to that sentence in the middle of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence about us all being created equal. And I got a whole room full of kids staring back at me blankly, and I said, "Look, here's what I'm going to do. I'll tell you the beginning of the sentence, and I'll give \$20 to the first student that can finish the sentence for me." So I said to this class, "We hold these truths to be self-evident."

And let me just say, I didn't lose \$20 that day. Nobody could finish the sentence. And in over 100 high school visits in the next two years, I only gave up \$40. So there's a real question, I think. If we don't even teach the basic moral and ultimately biblical idea about the nature of our liberty to our own students, it's very doubtful that young Americans will understand the uniqueness and value of the place they were blessed to be born in.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer:

Yesterday, I was at a dentist and the man who was taking care of me was from Syria. And I asked him a couple of questions, and we both agreed that the only people who trash America are those who have never been out of America to see what life is like elsewhere. And so I know that America has many faults, all the racism, the other issues. And that's why, actually to get back to the book, what I say in *The Eclipse of God* is we must all humble ourselves, we must come to the foot of the cross, and it has to begin by believers.

Gary, I want to explain to all those who are listening why I wrote the book. There was an article in *The Economist* a number of years ago that said that God is becoming more tolerant. As a matter of fact, he now agrees with same-sex marriage and so forth. And the online edition was entitled "Nearer My God to Me." And in my book I have a chapter on that. What we have done as Americans is we have redefined God so that we can manage Him.

And back to the issue of the church, I point out that there are two doctrines that destroy the power of the church. One is the inherent goodness of human beings, and the other is God being endlessly tolerant and not a God of judgment. So even as we're talking about America, we've talked about its benefits, my heart is that the church in America will recognize that we cannot stand against the culture until we kneel before God, until in humility and

repentance we come, and the God of the Bible is not the God of contemporary culture.

And I point that out very, very clearly. And then one of the questions that came up in this article was this. It says, nobody believes in the smitey almighty of the Old Testament, the God who smote the Egyptians, the God who smote Sodom and Gomorrah. So I have a chapter...

Gary Bauer: It's a great chapter. It's a great chapter.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: I have a chapter on that and ask whether or not God is more tolerant than He used to be and show that the Old Testament and the New Testament God are the same. And I want to just share my heart with all who are listening to say this, with greater grace comes greater judgment. And if you read the Book of Revelation, you discover the terror that is going to come to the unrepentant worse than anything in the Old Testament.

So in the midst of all of our discussion, I wanted to make clear to our audience that my heart is that we might get back to the God of the Bible. He's a God who hates sin, and He's a God who rescues us from our sin through Jesus Christ. And that's a message we have to get around the world.

Gary Bauer: No question about it. I'm not a theologian, and for whatever reason, I've always felt in my life that God led me to be involved in government and all these debates, et cetera. That's why I ended up in Washington, D.C. and went here to go to law school and never quite escaped. So it's been an interesting life.

But I love the chapter in the book where you address those who say that because the God of the Old Testament, who is the God of the New Testament also, but the God of the Old Testament makes many people uncomfortable because of what He tells people to do. There've been some fairly important pastors in America, I'm not sure I need to name them, but who have suggested that we need to abandon the Old Testament.

We need to cut it loose because it's a stumbling block. I'm thinking of one particular that has made that case. How do you have a New Testament without the Old Testament? Isn't it impossible?

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: First of all, in the one chapter on the Old Testament about the smitey almighty, I deal with the flood, the killing of the Canaanites, and also stoning for adultery and for other infractions. How do we understand that in relationship to the New Testament where we don't have that? So that is absolutely critical. But here's to your point, and we all know I think who we're talking about when we speak about a pastor who says that the Old Testament has to be unhitched from the New.

In fact, I quote him in my book. Well, the answer is this, there's no way you talk about the genealogies. You look at the life of Jesus Christ. You look at His constant references to the Old Testament. You think of the number of times that Paul refers to Old Testament incidents, whether or not it's Pharaoh, whether or not it's the wandering in the wilderness. I mean, the Old Testament and the New Testament go together like a hand and a glove. I'm going to see if I can quote this.

I hadn't planned on it and I'll see how it comes out. But "it has been said that the new is in the old concealed and the old is in the new revealed." And so the God of the Old Testament is the same God as the New Testament. And I show why things are different in the New Testament, how there are various changes because of God's administration, but the basic principles, including principles of judgment, are absolutely the same.

And as it says in Hebrews, if they didn't escape judgment in the Old Testament, how much more sure are we that we will not escape judgment now that we have more grace? In fact, one of the last chapters of the book that I think will gain some attention is this, returning to the God of wrath and grace, not the God of unconditional love. You see, there are many people, many pastors who preach God loves you unconditionally.

The person in the pew thinks, "Well, I'm sleeping with my girlfriend, but God, He loves me unconditionally, so He accepts me unconditionally." Now, there is an unconditional love in the New Testament and that is given to all those who believe, who are secure in Christ. But I quote verses of Scripture that talk about God's coming judgment, it's enough to give you the chills.

And so we can't back away from that. Now, thankfully, we have Jesus Christ who saves us from the wrath to come. And even as I contemplate those other attributes of God that I've just referred to, it motivates me to get the gospel of Christ to more people with more compassion and with more conviction than ever.

Gary Bauer:

And again, I loved the book, folks. You need to get this. It's exactly the book you need for the times we're living in. The book is out today, so run out and get a copy. I'll ask you to give some more details about how to get it later. But at one point in the book, you say something which I hear quite a bit, but it's usually thrown in my face in a way to get me to go away or to quit urging Christian citizenship.

And what you say, which is obviously true, is that we can complain about a particular government leader, but we need to remind ourselves that all government leaders serve at the pleasure of God essentially. That's often brought up though by those who say that Christians being involved in the process of government or in the political debate is inappropriate, because God picks the leaders and we're supposed to be in a different arena, not that arena.

So I don't think that's what you meant with that sentence, but would you mind elaborating on it a little bit?

Dr. Erwin Lutzer:

I'm glad to elaborate on that. Obviously, promotion comes neither from the left nor from the right. God raises up one and puts down another. But should we be involved in the political realities of our culture? Yes, for two reasons. Number one, because the church should be speaking to the controlling realities of the culture as we've spoken about. And number two, we have to understand that there is a harmony between our responsibility and what God does.

Now, as somebody who believes in the doctrine of election, it would be very easy for me to come to the same conclusion. Why should I preach? The elect are going to be saved anyway. Yes, they will be saved, but the way they're going to be saved is through the preaching of the gospel. That's been the historic position of many people throughout church history.

I wrote the book, *The Eclipse of God*, for three reasons. Number one, to show the origin of our darkness, and that's where we went into the philosophers and the impact that they had. The second reason is that we might remember that God is in charge. The third reason is that we might repent as a church.

But going back to number two that you referenced, we have to keep in mind in the midst of all of our complaints, in the midst of all of our discouragements, first of all, that the church has been here before in different cultures, in different countries. But in Isaiah 6 where the prophet is asked to go, you remember Isaiah before the Lord, it says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up."

Uzziah was a king that reigned, I think, for 52 years. He was basically a good king, though he ended somewhat badly. So in the minds of people, who is going to rule over Judah? The throne is empty. You know what God was saying? Your throne on earth may be empty, but the throne in Heaven is well-occupied. Thank you very much. And what we need to do in the midst of our discouragements and even in the midst of our debates is to remember that the throne in Heaven is well-occupied.

And so that's why we live in faith. That's why we live in joy. We do what we can. But ultimately, we know that above everything, God rules. And I say to all the people who are so discouraged because all that they are watching is the news 24 hours and they see how we are being torn apart, and I say to everyone, look beyond those headlines and remember that Heaven rules.

There is a God. That doesn't mean that life is going to be easy. That doesn't mean that we aren't going to be persecuted, just look at church history. But it means that there is an ultimate purpose and that we have an ultimate loyalty that is beyond all political loyalty. It is beyond all that. It is to God our Father who redeemed us through His Son. So how does the Psalm end?

Well, verse 12, if I'm remembering correctly, kiss the sun. So I say we don't kiss the donkey, the Democrats, we don't kiss the elephant, which I believe is the Republicans, but we do kiss the sun.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: And in the midst of our political debate, we have to agree that we might have our differences, but we also have the opportunity of proving that our unity in Christ is stronger than our political unity. And I say to people, there's no use arguing with friends about this. Nobody probably is going to change their mind, unless you can have a sensible conversation.

But at the same time, we have to recognize that God is our king. And then there's something else very critical that I have to say. All of us know, Gary, and you'll agree, that we have problems in this country that no politician or political party or president can save or remedy, and that is their spiritual problem.

And that's why despite all the input politically and otherwise, we always want to exalt Christ, and we invite people to worship Him. And that has to be our burden even in the midst of political wrangling.

Gary Bauer: As you were talking through there, Doctor, I remember that old story about some writing on a wall somewhere in Europe, "God is dead. Signed, Nietzsche." And somebody had come along and put, "Nietzsche is dead. Signed, God." It is a good reminder that there's only one God, and even the Marx's and Nietzsche's and Darwin's of the world will someday bend their knee and bow their head or have a very bad time in eternity.

It's great to spend this time with you, but tell us how will people be able to quickly get their hands on this because I think this is a great read anytime, but particularly in a year where America's making big decisions about what direction we want to go to as a nation.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: Before I give you that info, I want to say that the book also deals with the issue of creation, transgender issues. It also shows why we need God to tell us what is right and what is wrong. It cannot arise from the human situation. It has the book on law, why law needs transcendent values, and of course, the other chapters that we've talked about.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: My suggestion is go to ChristianBook.com. Of course, it can also be found on Amazon and other outlets.

Gary Bauer: Doctor, this has been a great two days of conversation. And as I've said a couple of times, this ought to be on everybody's list, a must-read book. *The Eclipse of God*. There's so many things going on in our country. There's millions of

Americans don't understand what's happening. We're worried. More and more people are looking for answers. Doctor, could I ask you to lead us into a prayer that our country will find the right way in these trying times?

Dr. Erwin Lutzer: My privilege to pray. Father, we desperately need You. Show us our need, Father, as a church, that in repentance and humility, we might come before You and represent You and definitely be lights in a very confused and hopeless world. Help us to always remember that our heart's passion is that people come to know Jesus Christ as Savior, that we exalt Him.

And we say that through Him, there not only is hope, but there's forgiveness. And there is the wonderful relationship that we can have with You, not just now, but through all eternity. Make us passionate in our witness for Christ. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Gary Bauer: Amen.

Roger Marsh: Well, amen. That was truly a beautiful prayer from today's guest, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, here on Family Talk. And remember, if you missed any part of this two-part conversation featuring Dr. Erwin Lutzer and our host Gary Bauer, you can listen to what you missed on the Family Talk app or visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, you can also learn more about Dr. Lutzer's book called *The Eclipse of God*.

By the way, if you're looking for some guidance to help maneuver through this eclipse that's taking place in the culture right now, this election season is a perfect time for you to make your voice heard. You can sign up to receive our free voter guide when you go to www.drjamesdobson.org/countdown-to-decision-2024.

Our prayer is that more believers than ever before will be confident when they cast their ballot this election season, that biblical values will be represented at the polls. Again, that's www.drjamesdobson.org/countdown-to-decision-2024. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making Family Talk a part of your day, and be sure to join us again tomorrow right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.