

What You Need to Know About the Coming Metaverse

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SPEAKERS

The Christian Worldview Free Resources, Host: David Wheaton, Program Director, Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries, Audio Clip: Mark Zuckerberg, Patrick Miller, Mark Zuckerberg

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Host: David Wheaton 00:07

What you need to know about the coming metaverse. That is the topic discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host, and our website is TheChristianWorldview.org. Thank you for joining us today on the program and for supporting the ministry of the Christian worldview and also to our national sponsor, Samaritan Ministries. who provide a biblical solution to health care. Now, speaking of healthcare real quick before we get to the preview for today's program, just this past week, OSHA which is the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, has suspended implementation and enforcement of the COVID "vaccine" mandate. They say this, "While OSHA remains confident in it's authority to protect workers in emergencies, OSHA has suspended activities related to the implementation and enforcement of the ETS pending future developments in the litigation". In other words, they are not going to enforce President Biden's vaccine mandate. National Review reported last week, the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit fully blocked Joe Biden's executive order requiring companies with over 100 workers to mandate vaccination for their employees after temporarily staying it on November 12. And by the way, it was not an executive order, it was just a mandate he made. The court ordered that OSHA take no steps to implement or enforce the vaccine mandate until further court order. Now of course this is great news. And this is why we should wait and pray and petition and repeat. And let's just pray this is thrown out for good, but just wanted to give you that update. Okay, let's get to our topic for the day. What you need to know about the coming metaverse. Now when Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, one of the most valuable and powerful companies in the world, makes a recent announcement that they are changing their name to Meta, one is led to ask, Now what is this all about? Well, what it's all about is a coming technology that is going to change life as we know it called the metaverse. What exactly is the metaverse? Well it's sort of hard to explain because it contrasts so much with the reality we all know. But basically the metaverse is an online world that you enter through virtual reality glasses or headsets and where the experiences are only limited by your imagination. So for example, you can customize your own home to have a view of the Pacific Ocean. Or you can choose whatever identity you'd like to be. Male, female, human, animal, space alien you name it. Want to go out to meet friends in London, let's say in real time without flying on an airplane to get there? Well, you can choose to sit at a table as an avatar, like a cartoon like version of yourself that you see on your phone

sometime, while your friend is there as a lifelike hologram. This may all sound crazy, foolish, and completely unnecessary, but there's something far deeper at work here. This is man's futile attempt to cast off God and the reality he established and identify as we choose, rather than how God has designed us and live in a virtual world of our own making, rather than the one God has made. If that isn't comprehensively God rejecting enough, I don't know what is. Patrick Miller, podcast host and pastor of Digital Ministries at a church called, The Crossing in Missouri, recently co authored a column for the Gospel Coalition titled How to Prepare for the Metaverse. He joins us today on The Christian Worldview for a look into the not too distant future in what Christians need to know about the metaverse. Patrick, thank you for coming on the program for the first time. Before we start talking about the metaverse, why don't you tell us briefly about your background and how you came to saving faith in Christ.

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Patrick Miller 04:27

Well, thank you so much for having me on the show. It's a real pleasure to be here. I became a Christian when I was 19 years old as a college student. And the short version of that story is I didn't grow up in a Christian household. And as a teenager who is in college, I was battling with a lot of questions, the big questions about life and I was also battling with depression and sadness, trying to make sense of why I was on this earth. Why had God put me here? And I realized that philosophy had no answers to those questions. In fact, my philosophy teacher tried to convince us that there was no such thing as God and I realized that there is no God, there is no purpose, I'm just floating on a pale blue dot in the middle of the universe and my life doesn't matter. Everything will eventually die in the slow heat death of the sun and my life, my existence, it has no real meaning. And thankfully, God reached out to me through a number of friends who were part of a campus ministry that I was a part of and they made me start asking the question, Have I contemplated whether there is an answer to those questions? And maybe Jesus had the answer to those questions. And so that led me down a path that eventually Easter of that year, I ended up coming to saving faith in Jesus and my life has not been the same since.

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Host: David Wheaton 05:38

Now you are a pastor today at a church called The Crossing down in Missouri, where you oversee digital ministries. I'm sure that's a growing aspect of church ministries. Just tell us briefly about that.

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Patrick Miller 05:52

I started in college ministry and then I began to lead a large ministry to people in their 20s. And I really began to realize during that time that people were being disciplined by their phones, by what they were seeing from Instagram influencers. And when you read the statistics, people spend 20 times more looking at screens than they do looking at spiritual content. And so I realized there was just this deficit of the kind of stuff that you're trying to do on this show out there, that I was reaching people on their phones, on their devices digitally, and helping to disciple them in the way of Jesus. And there was all kinds of other things out there that were disciplining them in the ways of consumerism and the ways of, I mean, you can just name every ism that there is out there. And so as a result, our church really realized that we needed to embrace in some sense, digital discipleship, not to the exclusion of the local church. I'm connected to a local church, I'm a pastor at a local church, but as a supplement to it, so that when people are online, when they're learning, they're actually getting Jesus in their everyday diet of digital content. And so that's what we do. We create a lot of podcasts, a lot of blogs, we have email newsletters, but it's all about giving people resources, adding new things into their digital diet that will help them follow Jesus more faithfully.

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Host: David Wheaton 07:03

Well, that certainly prepared you for what you are going to be talking about today here on the program, what's called the metaverse. You and Ian Harbor, co authored a column on the Gospel Coalition entitled, How to Prepare for the Metaverse. Let's start out by playing a recent audio clip from a presentation that Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook made and they've changed their name, at least their ownership of the company to this word meta, and I'm going to let you just start by laying some groundwork to what we're going to discuss today starting out with this name change and why that's important. Here's Mark Zuckerberg.

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Mark Zuckerberg 07:46

It is time for us to adopt a new company brand to encompass everything that we do, to reflect who we are, and what we hope to build. I am proud to announce that starting today, our company is now Meta. Our mission remains the same. It's still about bringing people together.

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Host: David Wheaton 08:08

So Patrick, for Mark Zuckerberg, one of the wealthiest, most influential person in the world, the head of Facebook, to actually change the name of their highly successful company to Meta? I mean, this is obviously a huge sea change. What does the word "meta" even mean? And why would he change the name of the company?

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Patrick Miller 08:31

Yeah, so those are two great questions. And they're two separate questions. Why change the name? I don't want to be a cynic and I obviously don't know Mark Zuckerberg or why he's making the choices that he's making. But it is a simple fact that over the last few months, you have news outlets like the Wall Street Journal and 60 Minutes, reporting on leaks that are coming out of Facebook that have made it evident, absolutely evident that they know that their products are harming in particular teenage girls, that are also fomenting a culture of outrage, a culture of tribalism, and that they're doing this, you know, for a profit. And so I think the cynical take on this would be, look, they've gotten a lot of bad press recently and so the name change kind of changes the conversation. All of a sudden, we aren't talking about those things. We're talking about meta, and the metaverse. But on the other side, it's not totally insincere because Facebook has been working towards this idea of the metaverse for quite a while and so that can lead to the question of why meta? What is the metaverse? Some people when they hear meta, they think it's just a way of saying hey, we own all these brands. You know, we own facebook, whatsapp, Instagram, we're just saying we own all of these things. And that's not it at all. Meta is really a nod to a future technology. A technology which does not exist. A technology which will likely not fully exist until my kids, who are currently you know three and five, until my kids are actually adults. So we're still a long ways away from it, but they're saying this is where we're going.

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Host: David Wheaton 09:56

Patrick Miller with us today here on The Christian Worldview, talking about what we need to know about the coming Metaverse. Now let me just read a paragraph from your recent column on the Gospel Coalition.

We have it linked at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. You write, Matthew Ball, a managing partner at a venture capital fund investing heavily in the metaverse writes this, "The metaverse is a massively scaled and interoperable, not inoperable, but interoperable network of real time rendered 3d virtual worlds, which can be experienced synchronously and persistently by an effectively unlimited number of users, and with continuity of data such as identity, history, entitlements, objects, communications and payments." Now I'll just say, I don't think that definition is that helpful. I have no idea what he even said there. Okay, let me read the next paragraph though. "The Metaverse is not a digital world. It's a digital world of worlds through which people can travel seamlessly, retaining their appearance and digital possessions wherever they go. These worlds do not merely exist in virtual reality or VR, but also layer on to physical reality through AR augmented reality." Now, again, still listeners may not get what this is. I'm actually going to play another audio clip from that presentation that Mark Zuckerberg made. And toward the beginning of it, he kind of gives this description, like an example of what the metaverse is going to be like, where he goes over to this virtual meeting there's people there and they've created this reality where they're in space and meeting around a table. And some people at the meeting are appearing as robots and some as a different avatar. I mean, really just out there stuff. But let me just play that audio clip to give listeners a better idea of what this Metaverse sounds like.

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Audio Clip: Mark Zuckerberg 12:02

Hey, and welcome to connect. Today we're going to talk about the metaverse starting with the most important experience of all, connecting with people. Imagine, you've put on your glasses or headset and you're instantly in your home space. And as parts of your physical home recreated virtually, it has things that are only possible virtually, and it has an incredibly inspiring view of whatever you find most beautiful. Oh, hey, Mark. Hey, what's going on? Whoa, we're floating in space? Who made this place? That's awesome! Right? It's from a creator I met in LA. This place is amazing. Boz, that you? Of course it's me. You know I had to be the robot man. I thought I was supposed to be the robot? Hey, should we deal you in? Sorry, I'm running late. But you gotta see what we're checking out. There's an artist going around Soho, hiding AR pieces for people to find. 3D street art? That's cool! Send that link over so we can all look at it. That is awesome! I love the movement! Wait, it's disappearing. This is amazing! Hold on. I'll text the artists and they'll extend it. Wow!

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Host: David Wheaton 13:23

Okay, Patrick. So you heard a lot of, "Wows! This is amazing." They're in this virtual world, people are floating around, they're all wearing these glasses. And I mean, this isn't something that people are just doing for five minutes just as an experience. This is like almost a new world, a new life being created. Really when I read your column and then watched this presentation by Mark Zuckerberg, by the way, we have it linked on TheChristianWorldview.org, I really encourage you to watch it just to get an idea of what it's about, this sounds like the biggest change to humankind in history, what is about to take place, about how people identify themselves and what they can experience and so forth. How is this going to work? And how will this be so attractive to people that people will want to be involved in this metaverse?

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Patrick Miller 14:10

Those are great questions. And again, because the technology is still in our future, we don't know entirely how it's going to work. Facebook, or I should say Meta now, they're giving us a sales pitch on one level. They're trying to sell us that there's going to be this amazing future reality. And yet I don't think it's hard for us to imagine. You know, during the pandemic, as more and more people began to work from home,

we're more used to having work calls over zoom. We're more used to maybe having people that we work with who live remotely and so we don't ever see them face to face, we interact with them digitally. Add to that that many of us have relationships, friendships, or people that you've connected with online that might be through social media. Maybe you made a friend on Twitter who you communicate with regularly or if you're in you know Gen Z or a younger millennial. Maybe you're a gamer and you play video games with not just people that you know in real life, but people that you've met online and you're on chats with them and you're talking with them about their life. But we're just in the early stages. So there's lots of examples of these things that we could talk about that are already happening today. None of them are the metaverse, but they're the zygote. They're the first little baby steps towards becoming what that thing is.

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Program Director 15:15

The Christian Worldview with David Wheaton returns in just a moment.

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Host: David Wheaton 15:19

Recent guest, Kal Beisner, defines economics as moral philosophy applied to marketplace relationships. So it makes sense that as our nation's judgement of what is right and wrong has moved away from biblical morality, our economic policies have gone the same wrong direction. So what is the Christian worldview on economics? Cal Beisner has written an insightful 56 Page softcover booklet titled, Biblical Foundations for Economics that shows how economic principles and policies need to be based on the Bible to achieve the greatest human flourishing. For a limited time, we are offering Biblical Foundations for Economics for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. To order, go to TheChristianWorldview.org, or call 1-888-646-2233, or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Again, the website is TheChristianWorldview.org.

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The Christian Worldview Free Resources 16:19

Be sure to take advantage of two free resources that will keep you informed and sharpen your worldview. The first is The Christian Worldview weekly email, which comes to your inbox each Friday. It contains a preview of the upcoming radio program, along with need to read articles, featured resources, special events, and audio of the previous program. The second is The Christian Worldview annual print letter, which is delivered to your mailbox in November. It contains a year end letter from host David Wheaton and a listing of our store items including DVDs, books, children's materials, and more. You can sign up for the weekly email and annual print letter by visiting TheChristianWorldview.org or calling 1-888-646-2233. Your email and mailing address will never be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. Call 1-888-646-2233 or visit TheChristianWorldview.org.

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Program Director 17:25

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. Be sure to visit our website, TheChristianWorldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print newsletter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Now back to today's program with host, David Wheaton.

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Host: David Wheaton 17:42

And as you're talking about that, I realized you think about like zoom calls. So you're there virtually at a meeting up on a screen. And then you look at the gaming industry. They wear these goggles, you know really high performance graphics and so forth, really realistic. You think of things that you can put even in a zoom call. You can put an alternate scene behind you or make yourself look like an avatar on a zoom call. It's not your real image. So it's combining all these things and things that we can't even imagine. It's going to be so much more beyond that, we'll get into it in a bit, but you can basically travel the world through your goggles, go anywhere without actually leaving where you are, and it will be super realistic, like you're actually there. Patrick Miller with us today, here on The Christian Worldview talking about what you need to know about the coming metaverse. Patrick is a pastor at The Crossing in Missouri. He also is a podcaster of the program, Truth Over Tribe. I want to read another short paragraph from your column that's linked on our website here. You write, "We will begin to live more of our lives disembodied, either as avatars in virtual reality spaces or holograms using AR technology, which is augmented reality. The separation we feel between our physical bodies and our surroundings and our virtual expanded consciousness will grow. It will be easy to begin to see the infinite possibilities of our virtual world and bodies as better and more real than the physical world." That's just hard to even comprehend. But talk about what VR is, what AR is, what mixed reality is, and whether this is going to be something, Patrick, like everyone nowadays, you even do it to do most jobs, you'd have to have like internet connection, you probably have to have a cell phone and be able to text and you know, there's things that just as society develops, you have to have them to be able to just interact and do business and so forth. I mean, is that going to be the case with the metaverse, that you don't have a choice, you have to be involved in this?

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Patrick Miller 19:52

I think it's like any technology that the degree to which people embrace it is yet to be known. But we've been headed that direction for a long time, and again, we're already seeing these things in very small ways. Like a great example of this is Fox, they have a new TV show called Alter Ego. And on this TV show, it's kind of like American Idol, except instead of having the artist come out and sing for a panel of judges, they select a digital avatar, and their avatar comes out and their avatar sings for the judges. And the logic behind it for the singers is either because of their social anxiety, or maybe because of their physical appearance, they don't feel like they've been able to make it. But as an avatar, they can be their true self, they can be authentic to themselves. And they can give a performance that would awe a set of judges. And so that's hitting on this idea that even now you're seeing people who are beginning to identify with a digitalized version of themselves. And by the way, on the show, these avatars don't look superhuman, right? They look like elves, they've got strange colored hair, strange colored skin, all of that. But they're identifying with a digital self and saying, This is the real me, this is me being myself as opposed to identifying with their body. And again, as I said in the article, we already have a lot of technology that makes some of this stuff possible. Most people don't realize this, if you have an iPhone, it has facial recognition technology. And what it does is it uses infrared scanners that bounce infrared light off of your face, and it records 30,000 unique points on your face. And this allows you to create what are called animojis and memojis some of your listeners will be familiar with these, but they're basically little digital overlays, it might make your face look like a panda or your face look like a dragon, you can pick what you want to be, but it will replicate your facial expressions. And that's how it does it. And it's not just that, your phone actually is built with a very, very sophisticated form of radar, which is tracking the room that you're in, so that it can identify, you know, desks or walls. And this allows it to do things. There's an app called Pokemon GO where players, they use their camera, and it will show Pokemon in the real world on their camera. And so you might have a Pokemon that's sitting on your desk or Pokemon that's standing on the floor. And that phone knows where the floor is and where the desk is because it's already using these radar technologies to identify the space around you. And so the key here at the metaverse is bringing all of these things together seamlessly so that people can use it easily in multiple settings.

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Host: David Wheaton 22:14

Now an avatar according to the dictionary is an icon or figure representing a particular person. And you see this used in video games or internet forums. It's almost like an animated version of yourself. Yeah, I guess that's a basic definition of it. But go back to the first part of that question about what is the difference between VR, Virtual Reality, AR, Augmented Reality, and MR, Mixed Reality? What are those things?

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Patrick Miller 22:43

So virtual reality, you know, you've been talking about putting on a VR headset, that'd be where you put on a headset and you have a computer or the headset device itself rendering a digital reality right in front of your eyes. So just like when you're looking at a screen, your computer is rendering, it's creating whatever you're seeing on that screen. So in virtual reality is a screen that encompasses your entire field of view. So it's immersive, it feels like you're in a space, that's what virtual reality is. So you can imagine a computer creating a house that you can live in, and you can walk around it in virtual reality. Or you can imagine a computer creating an office space that you could walk around in, in virtual reality, as long as you have those virtual reality glasses on. Augmented reality, it really overlaps with mixed reality, they're pretty much similar, or very same things, at least at this point. And that would be the idea that again, imagine you put on a set of glasses that lets you see the real world. So you're not looking into a virtual reality, but those glasses project digital things into your physical reality. Your listeners might be familiar, when I was a little kid, we had these little books that they would give you cross sections of like ships or maybe buildings and they were on little transparencies. And so you'd flip over one transparency, and it would show another layer. And then you could add another layer on top of that. That's kind of what AR is. It's layering digital things into your physical reality. So maybe your co worker isn't with you, but if you have these glasses on, they could be projected as though they're with you inside of your room. They can walk around your room, you can see them in your room, it will be like they are present there. That's what augmented reality is. And mixed reality is again, it's kind of the same thing. It's the idea that we can have both virtual and real reality mixed into one place.

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Host: David Wheaton 24:20

And I think we're going to get to that in one of the upcoming sound bites where Zuckerberg is talking about a business meeting where you're there in person, but the person next to you is like there is a hologram and maybe another person's there as an avatar or something. And this is the world where you're meeting together in the future. It's again, hard to even imagine how this will work. Patrick Miller joins us today on The Christian Worldview talking about the metaverse and what Christians need to know. We're going to get into some of the ethical and how the church is going to function in the midst of this coming world. I guess maybe that's a quick question before we even get to the next soundbite here. Is this going to happen for sure? You know, is this just a pie in the sky technology that may or may not happen, or is this absolutely coming our way?

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Patrick Miller 25:05

Yeah, after we wrote our article, I had a number of people kind of make fun of me and in a jovial, kind hearted way and said, Hey, you remember back in early 2000, there's something called Second Life. And it allowed you to create a digital avatar. And you could go inside of a digital world and move around and talk to people and engage with people. And back when Second Life came out, you had all these people saying,

this is the future, everybody's going to be in Second Life, we're all going to have avatars. But most your listeners probably never heard of Second Life. So needless to say, it never happened. And that's what some people are saying with the metaverse. Look, this is just kind of a pie in the sky dream. The main difference was that back 20 years ago, we simply lacked the computing power, we lacked the networking capacities. So we're talking about the speed of the Internet and the rate at which you can download and upload information. We lacked the hardware necessary, we lacked all of the parts to make it an immersive experience. But now all of a sudden, we are quickly approaching the point where these things are possible. And again, what we have to realize is that they're already happening. I can just give example after example. There's a rapper named Travis Scott, who did a live performance inside of the video game Fortnite. It's a first person shooter game where all these players come together inside of a battle arena. And he came inside of the arena, and he did a performance for people. And I talked to people who went to this performance digitally. And they told me, I mean, almost every single one of them told me it was a better experience for them than going to a show. They said look, I can have the music exactly how I liked it. I could be there with my friends. And they said it was a really cool experience. So they were trading in going to a live concert for going to a digital concert. And again, 20 years ago, that seemed ridiculous. But now all of a sudden, these things are becoming more common. So yes, I do think that this is not just a pie in the sky thing. I do think it's still a ways out, but we're already seeing aspects of it come to life in the present. And by the way, that Travis Scott concert had 30 million viewers. That's more than the Super Bowl. So this is not a small thing.

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Host: David Wheaton 26:58

Wow! Patrick Miller with us today on The Christian Worldview talking about the metaverse. He's a pastor down in Missouri at The Crossing. He also does a podcast called Truth Over Tribe. We have him linked at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Let's get to the next soundbite from Mark Zuckerberg and this presentation he did. It's uploaded on YouTube. It's had millions of views, The Metaverse and How We'll Build it Together. Of course, it's going to be something we build together, called Connect 2021. You can watch it for yourself. Let's get to the next soundbite where he talks about how this is going to change, the metaverse is going to change just sort of the way you live in your own home.

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Audio Clip: Mark Zuckerberg 27:38

You're going to be able to bring things from the physical world into the metaverse. Almost any type of media that can be represented digitally. Photos, videos, art, music, movies, books, games, you name it. Lots of things that are physical today, like screens, will just be able to be holograms in the future. You won't need a physical TV. It'll just be a \$1 hologram from some high school kid halfway across the world. And you'll be able to take your items and project them into the physical world as holograms and augmented reality, too. One part of this is horizon home, which is our early vision for a home space in the metaverse. Horizon home is the first thing that you'll see when you put on your quest headset. We've just called it home until now because it's been missing something very important. People. Soon, we're going to be introducing a social version of home where you can invite your friends to join you as avatars. You'll be able to hang out, watch videos together, and jump into apps together. Then there is horizon worlds, which is where you can build worlds and jump into them with people.

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Host: David Wheaton 28:47

Okay, so again, Mark Zuckerberg here. Just trying to kind of keep up with the imagination going on here. You look at this though, Patrick, and you think, yeah, you can invite people over to your home as avatars,

but those people aren't there in person, in reality, like you can touch them, although it's going to seem like they're there and they're in a completely different appearance. It seems to me this is going to make people become much more isolated and actually odd as they take off their glasses and they kind of reemerge in the real world and they look around the room and no one's actually there. And they realize that their regular real life is not nearly as interesting as their augmented or their virtual life. What is this gonna do to home, the aspect of home and relationships and just people's social skills?

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Patrick Miller 29:38

We've already seen the consequences of what people call web 2.0 or the social web, which is what we're living in right now and how social media has changed people's ability to interact with each other. And Facebook's been on this trajectory for a long time. You know, when it launched in the mid 2000s, the only way you could join Facebook was if you were in a college, you were a part of a local college community and then that expanded to include people that were in a civic community. So if you were a part of a certain number of cities, then you could join Facebook. And then eventually they got rid of the entire network aspect of it all together, anybody could join, and anybody could be a friend with anybody out there in the universe. And so they've been heading in this direction of distancing us from our close, local relationships, friendships, networks, and again, we're seeing the consequences of this in in Gen Z. You know, the studies about Gen Z show something that I think is really kind of sad and bizarre. First of all, they are incredibly isolated. They are incredibly lonely, and they are statistically speaking one of the most introverted generations in history. And yet, they are also one of the most extroverted generations in history, which sounds like a contradiction, but it's not because they are introverted insofar as they are with real people, but they are extroverted insofar as they are online and in relationships online. They want to be connected to others, but the only way they know how to do it is digitally. We see this with online dating. We see this with just how people communicate, you know? You might have two friends who never see each other, but most of their communication is happening via video chat on Instagram, or an app like Marco Polo. And so this is already changing how we relate to each other. It's hard to imagine how it's not going to continue the trend towards isolation, continue the trend towards depression and continue the trend towards an increased inability to interact with people in the real world.

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Program Director 31:26

The Christian Worldview with David Wheaton returns in just a moment.

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Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries 31:33

When it comes to your health care provider, what are some words you would use to describe your experience with them? Comfort, peace, confidence? Well, at Samaritan Ministries, those are just some of the words our members use frequently, like Samaritan member, former longtime board member, and now staff member, Jamie Pyles uses to describe his 24 year relationship with Samaritan Ministries. It's hard to put words into the comfort and the relief and the peace that you have as you come to terms that Samaritan Ministries is real, it's viable and it's working and is there. We just thank God that he's allowed us to have that kind of peace to be in a situation where I can focus on things that are far more important than, What are we going to do about health care. Want to be part of a growing, caring community of Christians who faithfully share each other's medical needs each month, all without the use of insurance? Find out more at SamaritanMinistries.org/tcw. That's Samaritan Ministries.org/tcw.

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Host: David Wheaton 32:30

David Wheaton here, volunteer host of The Christian Worldview Radio Program. Listeners are often surprised to learn that we as a ministry pay for airtime on the radio station, website, or app on which you hear the program. The primary way this expense is recouped is through listeners like you donating to the ministry or becoming a monthly partner. Our aim is to have each broadcast outlet fully supported by the listeners to that outlet. If you are a regular listener, we will be grateful if you made a donation or became a monthly partner of any amount. To do so go to the [ChristianWorldview.org](https://www.ChristianWorldview.org) and click on Donate. You can also call 1-888-646-2233. That's 1-888-646-2233 or the [ChristianWorldview.org](https://www.ChristianWorldview.org). And be sure to specify on which station, website, or app you listen as that helps us decide whether to continue on a given outlet. Thank you for your support.

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Program Director 33:37

Thanks for joining us on The Christian Worldview. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](https://www.TheChristianWorldview.org). Short Takes are also available. And be sure to share with others. Now back to today's program with host, David Wheaton.

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Host: David Wheaton 33:52

Patrick Miller again with us today on The Christian Worldview as we talk about the metaverse. This is something you need to know about because probably within about five or 10 years, I mean everything's being developed right now you can see little, little precursors of it now the way zoom calls operate, gaming goggles and all those different things happen, virtual reality glasses, how this is going to be put together to create this new metaverse, not a universe like we live in now, but this whole virtual reality. Let's get to one more soundbite from that presentation that Mark Zuckerberg gave introducing the metaverse the change of name from Facebook to meta. And here's what he said about just the lifestyle of what it's going to be like in the metaverse.

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Audio Clip: Mark Zuckerberg 34:34

Let's talk about some of the new advances here. Yeah, sure. There's a ton of new tech going into Cambria. For example, your avatar will be able to make natural eye contact and reflect your facial expressions in real time. This way people you're interacting with will have a real sense of how you're actually feeling. It does mean building more sensors into a form factor that's comfortable to wear for a while. We'll be taking this to the next level with high resolution, colored, mixed reality pass through. We essentially combine an array of sensors with reconstruction algorithms to represent your physical world in a headset with a sense of depth and perspective. But the ultimate goal here is true augmented reality glasses. And we've been working on that too. And today I want to show you an experience that we've been working on for Project Nasaray, which is the codename for our first full augmented reality glasses. Here, you'll see you're chatting with friends on WhatsApp and planning a game night. You can select a game and then as you walk over your kitchen, you can easily just put your game on to the table and you're off. That's the kind of experience that augmented reality will unlock. There's a lot of technical work to get this form factor and experience right. We have to fit hologram displays, projectors, batteries, radios, custom silicon chips, cameras, speakers, sensors to map the world around you and more into glasses that are about five millimeters thick. So we still have a ways to go with Nasaray, but we're making good progress.

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Host: David Wheaton 36:04

Okay, that was Mark Zuckerberg talking about what life's gonna be like on game night. You know, it sounds like it's gonna really enhance your game night when you go play cards or some family game. But this is going so far beyond this, Patrick, where you basically create your own identity the way you want to look and you enter different realms through these virtual reality glasses and so forth. It reminds me of that sign on the bar that says, Wednesday nights, half price beer and axe throwing contest. What could go wrong? So how do you see this metaverse being used? Extremely sinfully or nefariously by you know, governmental controls or those who want to capture authority over the world and over people? How do you see it being used in some negative ways? I mean, I'm sure there's just many, but name a few.

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Patrick Miller 36:57

I think there are a number of ways that we could talk about and again, we're doing guesswork. The reality is that Facebook despite its aspirations will likely not be able to own the metaverse, it will most likely be a decentralized organization. So that gives us a little bit of hope in the sense that you probably won't have a bunch of power players sitting at the top at least in the direction that it's headed right now. But on the flip side of that, I think that this is going to, let me put it this way. There was a really interesting tweet by guy who is very positive about the metaverse. His name is Shane Pirie, he's an investor, he does a number of things. But he said that, "The metaverse is the moment in time where our digital life is worth more to us than our physical life." You know, that's a really dangerous place to get. And unfortunately, a lot of Christians, we aren't prepared for this. Unfortunately, our theology has been shaped more by the thinking of people like Plato, who had the idea that our physical bodies are bad and all of our mental, our ideas, that those are good. And so we have already bought into, many Christians, the idea that what makes me is what happens between my ears. But that's not at all how the Bible talks about us. The hope of the Bible is resurrection of course. And that means my physical body being resurrected, just like Jesus's was, my future resurrection, it will not resurrect my followers on Instagram, it's not going to resurrect my avatar inside of the metaverse, the person that will get resurrected, is me. And so I think one of the darkest things that happens is it's going to continue to press us in this direction of thinking that once again, between our ears is what matters most. And that's dangerous. We're already there. We're already in a world where your gender can be whatever you want your gender to be. We're already in a world where whatever you imagine to be true about yourself, you can declare it as my truth and all of a sudden it is true. What happens when you can create a real simulacrum of yourself online that other people see? Well, eventually you'll start to identify with that me over the real me. The problem again, is that God made the real me. I have a givenness, right? My identity is given to me by God. I can't just throw it off. I can't become a digital person. And so I think when we start becoming these digital people, it's going to lead us kind of like the Tower of Babel to a place where we think that we can construct our own reality, we can construct our own identity. And that's not a good place for humans to be. God puts limits on us for a reason, not because he wants what's wrong for us, but because he wants what's best for us. Living within the limits that God has set for us is actually what sets us free to be ourselves in the most true sense.

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Host: David Wheaton 39:25

That's very well said Patrick and that segues so well into the next question here. And this is, I'm going to quote from your your column that we have linked on our website. "If you think society is struggling with questions of identity now, get ready. Individuals will be able to express themselves however they want through fully customizable avatars in the metaverse. For example, in Mark Zuckerberg's presentation, a friend appeared as a robot." We heard that earlier in the interview today. "What happens when we identify more, (David Wheaton speaking- just as you just mentioned), with a virtual version of ourselves, than with

our real selves? People will begin to conflate their God given identity with the self made identity they crafted for themselves in the metaverse. Then you mention this. "The transhumanism debate is on our doorstep." And maybe you can explain that in just a second. "The imago dei is about to encounter the imago meta in a world where every aspect of our identity will be completely customizable, celebrating a received identity given by God to be His human image bearers. That's what we're given." God gives us that as you mentioned. "Made with flesh and bone, male and female for the cultivation of the world will be radically countercultural, just to identify as God made you rather than what you create yourself to be." So how is a Christian going to be able to interact in this new world of customizable identity, which is just inherently God rejecting to start with, where you create your own identity, not the one God gave you?

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Patrick Miller 40:57

I think that's a great question. And I suppose futurists will have to give us some advice on it. You know, what I want to prepare my children for is actually pretty straightforward. I want them to embrace first of all, who they are as embodied people. And if they're going to have an experience in the metaverse, which they most likely will, and I most likely will, we all probably most likely will, I want them to think about from an ethical perspective, is it right? Look, there's probably nothing wrong with creating an avatar that doesn't look like you just for fun, just to, you know, enjoy and have a good time. That's creative. I don't know that there's a problem with that. The problem becomes whenever I create an image of myself, which I associate myself more with, and by the way, we're already facing this question on social media. I mean, the amount of people who post pictures on social media and it makes their life look perfect. You know, here's my family and I and everything we do is smiles. And there's always leaves flying in the air, and it's perfect. And aren't we wonderful? Aren't we amazing? When the reality is that no one has a perfect family, no one has a perfect life, you're projecting an image of yourself online, which is not true, which is not authentic. And I think Christians will have to face that, which is saying, you know, if I want to follow Jesus, I'm gonna have to choose to be authentic. And part of that looks like being true to the person that he's made me. That if I do have to have a metaverse version of me to interact with others, I'm going to make sure that it's not a lie. And if I can press it even further, I think we're going to have to help a lot of people, this is going to escalate anxiety to whole whole whole new levels. There's a lot of studies that show that the more options you have the less happy you are, you know. So if you give someone three options of candy and they pick one, they're going to be happier than if you gave them 20 options of candy and you let them pick one. Well, what happens when you're online and you have a infinite endless number of options of who you can be? Well, the answer is that I'm going to be less happy. The answer is that I'm going to be anxious because all of a sudden, instead of allowing God to create me and God to define me, I have this godlike responsibility to define myself, to create myself, to project myself. And if people reject that, if people don't like that, it will cut to the core of who we are. The church very well may end up being the last place that accepts you as you are not just as you're projected.

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Host: David Wheaton 43:09

Another great segue to my next question. Patrick Miller with us today, here on The Christian Worldview. A pastor and co author of the column we're talking about, How to Prepare for the Metaverse. He's a pastor down in Missouri at The Crossing. We have him linked at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. He's also a podcaster. The name of the podcast is Truth Over Tribe. Let's talk about the church, Patrick. You write in the column, Henry Ford didn't set out to create mega churches. You're thinking, what's the connection there? But before the advent of the personal vehicle, most Christians seeking a church faced a simple denominational decision. Do you attend the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Catholic Church around the corner and basically down the street from your house? Now with a vehicle, Christians could suddenly attend whichever church had the best children's ministry programming, youth activities,

and rock and roll Sunday morning worship, as long as it was within 10 to 30 minutes of driving. This wasn't the first time and won't be the last time technology changed the church. You're talking about the metaverse here. But even as the pace of technological change has felt dizzying and exhausting for churches in recent years, we've only seen the tip of the digital iceberg. The real change, which will truly transform our mental, spiritual and ecclesial landscapes is coming soon, the metaverse. Now I can just hear it now. We're going to be hearing from an evangelical church that redeeming the metaverse is a gospel issue. I can just hear it already that you know we need to redeem the culture, now we need to redeem the metaverse. Can the church, Patrick, still be the church when the metaverse arrives? Because after all, the Bible defines church as the preaching of the Word and accountability to the elders in that church, in person fellowship, in person communion, prayer. Those things can't be done in virtual or augmented reality. What is this going to do to the church?

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Patrick Miller 45:06

To question that, you know, as a pastor, a lot of people faced in the middle of the pandemic. What do you do when there's, you know, a month or two months or in some cases even longer months long lockdown? How do you do communion? So churches have already begun to face some of these questions. And that's where I want to say like, I want to be sober minded about what the future is. And I also don't want to, you know, say that the sky is falling. The reality is, in my opinion, that the church is what you described, it's always going to be a local embodied group. It's always going to be the person who can sit next to you in the pew and see your day in day out life and pray with you when you're hurting, and you can pray with them when they're hurting. But that said, a lot of people are going to live their lives in the metaverse and so I would frame it less about can we have churches in the metaverse? Are there going to be meta churches? I would frame it more around the question of how do churches think in a missional mindset in the metaverse? In other words, how do you reach people who the only way you will ever meet them, you will ever talk to them as if you're willing to go inside of their meta reality? That's a huge challenge. How are churches going to react when someone will probably refuse to ever visit their church, to ever walk through those doors unless they can come and visit in some sort of meta reality? These are gonna be some of the questions that we have to face. In other words, can we create spaces to welcome in the citizens of the metaverse into our churches so that they can meet Jesus and hear the gospel? But can we always make sure that it's taking the monitor jectory which brings them out of a digital only connection and brings them into a local physical connection with a local physical church? I don't know how we'll do that. But again, I just want to say we're already facing this. I mean no one, I'll be honest, I don't think anyone comes to our church until they've watched our church on a live stream or they've seen a video service of it. I think that's the way most people are picking churches now. They're looking online before they ever come in person. And so we're always asking, how can we help people to feel welcome, have a big front door, and then help them to take the next steps in, take the next steps to actually become a part of our community?

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Host: David Wheaton 47:11

Patrick Miller with us today on The Christian Worldview talking about the metaverse. I just have one more question for you, Patrick. And I'll read the last few paragraphs or last couple paragraphs of your column here. We have it linked at our website [The ChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). "As disciples of Jesus, you write, "We insist upon the goodness of our physical world and bodies. Adam's first most fundamental job was to cultivate a garden. Jesus calls His followers to care for the sick, to visit the lonely, to lift up the downtrodden, and steward the environment. We know a virtual world created by publicly traded companies will never be more real, or more important than the world God created and called very good." Next paragraph. "The metaverse will present us with the opportunity to experience glimpses of power that

only God has. The readiness of information will give us a glimpse of being omniscient because again, things are going on." I'm just gonna interject here. You'll be able to travel all around the world in your glasses and it'll be so realistic. You're gonna feel like you're in Jerusalem, you're in London and Paris, wherever you want to go, you're going to be able to go there, virtually. Moving on, "The ability to create worlds and identities will give us a glimpse of being omnipotent. The conquering of geographic boundaries will allow us to be wherever we want to be at any given time approximating omnipresence, just that was mentioned the travel. So omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, these are attributes of God, that breaking down your right of the space time barriers, as you're able to travel back in time as well through virtual reality experiences will give us a glimpse of eternity. Our futuristic Tower of Babel is luring us in with promises of limitlessness." And final paragraph before the questions coming here. "Well, we can't predict all the ways the metaverse will change us." And I think you're right about that. We just have no idea how this is going to roll out. "We know that Christian witness is always countercultural. The Metaverse may promise godlike power and knowledge, but like all idols, it will take more than it gives. Despite its allure, the metaverse will ultimately point beyond itself to the transcendent king with a capital K, whose words made non virtual reality a reality." So I'm going to close our conversation today, Patrick, by just asking you the Francis Schaffer question here. How now shall we live in this coming world? What is your final word here for Christians listening or those who have not put their faith in Christ? What is your message to them as they hear about this metaverse world coming and thinking, what is this all about?

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Patrick Miller 50:00

We're living in a moment with secularism all around us that has disenchanting our world. We think that the only thing that exists in the world is this flat material world, just this stuff that I can touch and there is no spiritual reality around us. And what the metaverse is promising us is to re enchant reality, to give us a place where all of a sudden, all the spiritual longings that we have can be satisfied, they can be fulfilled, we can become almost like God. And of course, it's not going to satisfy that urge, it will always leave you hungry. And of course, that hunger that you have deep down, if you have that hunger, it's for something. You are hungry for a transcendent reality, you are hungry for one who is limitless, you are hungry to see the enchantment of the world, that there's a spiritual reality all around us. You're hungry for purpose, you're hungry for meaning and the metaverse can't satisfy that. Only Jesus can satisfy that. And so I think as we look at the metaverse, as we look at these future possibilities, we just have to remember we're hungry for something. This isn't it. Only Jesus is.

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Host: David Wheaton 51:02

That is so well said. Thank you for concluding our conversation on both a very interesting topic, but you know, very, almost troubling as what this is going to do to mankind and individual souls as people get wrapped up and as you said earlier, spend more of their life in a virtual world than they do in the real world as they enter this world of the metaverse. Patrick Miller, thank you so much for coming on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. Thank you for taking the time to really look into what this metaverse is and really telling us about it so we can be prepared for it as believers and the church as well. All of God's best and grace to you.

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Patrick Miller 51:40

Thanks so much for having me on. I pray God's blessings will be with you and your listeners as well.

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Host: David Wheaton 51:45

If you think social media has been harmful to people, the metaverse will be exponentially worse. It's really man creating his own identity and reality. It's new technology with the same old motivation to get out from under the authority of God. But the metaverse will not dethrone God, and is only Satan's twisted scheme to turn people away from God. It will never satisfy, because God created us to know and worship Him. The greatest satisfaction and joy comes from being reconciled to God in living for him and his reality, according to the identity that he has given us. So if you haven't been reconciled to God, repent of your sin, and put your faith and trust in the person of Jesus Christ and His work for you on the cross when He died for your sins and rose victoriously over sin and death. And live by Bible verses, not the metaverse. Technology may be changing, but remember that Jesus Christ and His Word are the same yesterday, and today and forever. Until next time, "Think biblically, live accordingly," and stand firm!

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Program Director 52:59

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