“What Makes the Bible a Reliable Text on Angels?”

You cite the bible as a source of insight into angels. What makes the bible a better source than any other fiction book that has been written by anyone at anytime? Say I wrote a book about angels because I wanted to get people to believe in something they have never seen or felt or touched or smelled or tasted. If I aged it 2 or 3 thousand years and there were people like you around, would they believe it? What if I gave it a prolific name like The Word, or Holy Text, or The Greatest Truest Book Ever Written, does it then become more plausible? What are your thoughts?

Hi _____,

My thoughts are that the Bible gives more than “insight” about angels; it gives actual revelation—information from “outside the box,” so to speak.

You can choose to call the Bible a book of fiction, but that would only be because you haven’t considered the evidence that shows it’s not. For instance, fulfilled prophecy alone is a staggering evidence that it was divinely inspired, for who else could write history in advance other than the God who is outside of time?

I invite you to try and debunk the truth and validity of the Bible. Many others have, and they have become its most convinced defenders. If it truly can be debunked, then it’s not worth believing in. But if it’s true, and I completely believe it is because of the evidence, then it’s worth paying attention to.

I have a suspicion you have an opinion of the Bible that is not based on anything more than a contempt for God and possibly for the people who believe in the Bible. (And allow

me to concede, regretfully, that a lot of religious people say and do things that make God wince because they misrepresent Him so egregiously, and it has a negative impact on others who are watching—people like you? I think God grieves over this.)

You might consider shoring up your reasons. Our website is full of resources that provide good evidence that Christianity, and the Bible, are both true. If you don't care to check anything out, then at least I would hope you would be honest enough to admit that your unbelief is based on a refusal to investigate and not because there are good reasons for it.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Does Lucky Mean Lucifer Has Smiled on Me?"

I would like to know the meaning to the word LUCKY. I have been told that it means Lucifer has smiled on me and blessed me. If this is true where do I find this information?

If you go to dictionary.com, this is what you'll find:

lucky
adj. luckier, luckiest

1. Having or attended by good luck. See Synonyms at happy.
2. Occurring by chance; fortuitous.
3. Believed to bring good luck: *hoped to draw a lucky number.*

There’s nothing there about Lucifer. What you heard is something someone made up, and there’s nothing to it.

From a Christian worldview, there IS no such thing as luck, because God is in control of everything. There’s such a thing as blessing, but not luck. God is in control; Satan is not. In fact, at the cross he was stripped of all real power (see Col. 2:15). All he has is wiles and lies, and if we arm ourselves with the truth we can fight him all the time.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Are Militant Angels Good, Bad or Ugly?”

Dear Sue,

Just recently we have been looking at some old photos of when we first moved into our old house and there was a sign out the front that said “BEWARE MILITANT ANGELS GUARD THIS PROPERTY.” And I was just wondering what this meant. Are these good, bad or ugly angels? Please email back even if you don’t come up with anything.

Boy, the people who had the house before you had quite a sense of humor! There are no such things as militant guardian angels, since militants are people who are angry and rebellious. The demons who fell from heaven were militant against God, but they’re into destruction, not protection. And the holy angels who protect us are submissive, not militant.

I think the sign is in the same category as the humorous signs I've seen that say "This property protected by an attack cat," and they mean a household kitten.

At any rate, your e-mail made me smile, and I appreciate it. Let me encourage you that it's cool and you have nothing to worry about.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Are Angels Male or Female?"

I've read your article "Angels: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," and I have a doubt about the angel story that describes an angel taking care of a child and her mother, but the angel appeared to be a hospital nurse.

I mean, is an angel a he or a she? Or can they be either man or woman?

Angels are not sexual beings; the Lord said they do not marry (Mark 12:25), and sexuality and gender would seem to be an element of humanity, not angel beings. So angels can take on human appearances of both males and females. It's like taking on a role in a play, complete with costume.

That being said, all biblical references to angels use the masculine pronoun "he." That doesn't mean they can't appear as female, but it's good to know the baseline from scripture.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

“Which Is It: Man’s Free Will or God’s Omniscience?”

A friend of mine posed this question to me. I would like to pass it along for your reflection:

> *When we say that God “knows the future”, are we saying that He possesses knowledge of all future events? My premise is that in order for free will for Man to exist, then it is impossible for God to know all future events. In other words, these concepts are mutually exclusive. If that is true, then which one exists – free will in humans, or knowledge by God of all future events? (Or is my premise wrong?) My opinion is that free will exists, and therefore God cannot know all future events. Furthermore, Christians should not be troubled by the concept of a God that does not possess knowledge of all future events. They should rest assured that – one way or another – He will execute His plan and carry out His promises.*

Thanks for any insights that I could pass along to him.

This is a big issue in theological circles today—sort of the “God version” of the “what did he know and when did he know it?” question. The debate over the extent of God’s foreknowledge is called “open theism.” (Check out Rick Wade’s article called “God and the Future“).

But I can tell you what we believe. God does, indeed, know

every single detail of the future, which is why the Bible contains accurate prophecy of future events—because not only did God know they would (and will) happen, but because He is sovereign, He superintends them.

I think many people misunderstand the concept of "free will," which is not a biblical term. The reality is that while we have the ability to make truly significant choices, we don't have truly "free" will. You cannot, for example, choose to wake up tomorrow morning in China when you go to bed in Chicago. Or wake up speaking Chinese when all you know is English. You cannot choose to be a different gender than what God made you. (Yes, I'm aware of sex-change operations and know people who've had them—we're not even going there! <smile>) But we can make choices that make a difference: for example, in our attitudes, in who we marry and most importantly, which God we serve. We have limited freedom in our choices, and God does not force us to choose things His way; He respects our choices. But we do not have totally free will.

I think your friend misunderstands the concept of God's sovereignty ("one way or another – He will execute His plan and carry out His promises") if he thinks that God can have a plan and execute it if He doesn't know everything that's going to happen. You can't have it both ways. A God who is not omniscient cannot be sovereign. A sovereign God MUST be omniscient.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is It Wrong to Be a Sperm or Egg Donor?”

Dear Sue,

Quick question. What is your view on sperm/egg donations? Do you think it is wrong to be a donor? Why or why not? This is an interesting topic.

Quick answer. Yes, I think it’s wrong to seek—or be—a donor. Because the creation of a new human being is supposed to be the product of love and commitment in a marriage relationship, not a consumer commodity that we produce simply because we want a baby. Any time there is a sperm or egg donor, that means people are going outside the marriage relationship to get what they want, which means a type of adultery.

In the case of infertility, this is a difficult and emotional issue, but I think we should remember that no one has the “right” to have a baby. It’s like saying, “OK, God, You’re not cooperating to give me what I want, so I’m going to get it my way.” Same thing for people who want to be parents but aren’t married; having a baby is about getting what they want, not about what’s in a child’s best interests (which is always going to be a mother and father in a stable marriage).

This is a great example of why the “technological imperative” is wrong; simply because we CAN, doesn’t mean we SHOULD.

Thanks for asking.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“It’s So Hard to Be a Christian on My Job!”

I am a commercial airline pilot and a born-again Christian. I am frequently confronted with a very in-your-face, sexually explicit, lewd, and immoral environment from the crew members I fly with. I let people know that I am a Christian, that I attend church and that I attend a men’s group. However, it seems the barrage of sex jokes and immorality just keeps coming even though they know I am not into those things. I know that I am not the morality police and I try very hard not to be critical and judgmental. I try to find other “common ground” and try to serve my crew members and get to know them. But sometimes, I feel like maybe I need to let them know more emphatically that I don’t want to participate or be a part of those types of conversations and jokes. I don’t want to come across as judgmental and holier than thou but I also would like to establish healthy boundaries and establish a clear identity so people know who I am and what I am and am not about. Sometimes, I feel so frustrated about how to handle a situation that I just say nothing but then I feel like it’s not healthy to just sit there and listen to garbage all the time. I was wondering if you have any suggestions that might help me approach future situations with maturity and clarity. I truly desire to serve God on my job. I have a heart for people and would like to find the balance between being judgmental and just sitting back and saying nothing.

I asked my friend Mike Cleveland, the writer and webservant of Setting Captives Free (www.settingcaptivesfree.com), who is also a commercial pilot, how to answer your question.

> *Dear Sue, I’m glad to see him desiring to be in the world but not of it. Of course I’m in these same situations as he is. I do not normally let them know, with my words, that I am a*

born-again, blood-bought child of God, but I do try to show it in my actions hoping that doors will open that I can speak of Him with my words. Normally when the crew goes down to eat in the hotel together is where most of this coarse joking takes place. People get together, have a few drinks and the foul speaking begins. I don't partake of it at all, I get silent and don't laugh at the filthy jokes whatsoever but simply turn away and look out the window or read the menu, or find some other way to disengage from the conversation. I have discovered that the strong man can be around that stuff and neither have to laugh at it nor declare how juvenile it is and how spiritual we are, but rather we can be silent and strong. For the past couple of years I haven't had this type of joking go on around me; though I don't get "in your face" about my beliefs, there is the "aroma of heaven" that accompanies a child of God who knows who he is in Jesus. If someone does slip with a bad word they normally look at me and say, "oh sorry Mike" yet they may not have even heard me say I'm a Christian. It's called silent intimidation, letting them "hear" our character by having them watch our deeds and the way we live. We are the light of the world, and a light cannot be hidden. A light "speaks" simply by its presence. Help him to learn to enjoy the presence of the Lord and wherever he goes he will BE a light. The enjoyment of God is what we have that the world doesn't, and that joy in the Lord can't be hidden. "They took notice of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Of course every now and then God opens a door where we can be bold with our words and proclaim the gospel freely. I love those times. But they are few and far between because the road to life is narrow and few find it. Mike

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

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“My teacher is encouraging me to question my beliefs”

Dear Sue,

I hope I can word all of this correctly and in the most concise manner possible. Thomas Aquinas of Renaissance times said one must question what he believes rather than accept things blindly. This was the whole mindframe of the rebirth from the dark ages. My mother of modern times says she doesn’t question her faith because she wants to stay strong in her beliefs. I agree with Aquinas. Whatever is in quotation marks in this letter is an excerpt from my history teacher’s e-mails to me. He wrote, “The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe.” He said I should decipher “propaganda from purpose.” He studied different religions alongside Christianity such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and even though he didn’t buy into them he realized that they were all promoting the same basic ideas: “The golden rule is in every major religion.” Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion. I know I’m kind of jumping around but I hope you’ll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, “Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom.” It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs. He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Here come some more quotes! “The last line of the Lord’s prayer is an addition by a monk. .. Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem.”

> *I agree with Aquinas.*

I do too, which is why I'm glad I was able to catch up with you in the bathroom at church where I could use the wall to illustrate the point that it's the strength and credibility of what we believe in, rather than the strength or fragility of our faith, that matters. That's why it's okay to question Christianity: it can MORE than hold up under scrutiny. Just like that wall was more than adequate to stand up to me pushing against it.

> *He wrote, "The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe."*

That's true. Part of growing up means examining our beliefs that sit in our head like canned goods sit on the shelf of our mind, and we decide which ones we're going to keep and which ones we're not. Once you believe to keep the "can" of a belief, it becomes yours instead of your parents' or your teachers'. HOWEVER! The most important question is not, "Do I believe it, or was I merely taught to believe it?" but "Is it true, regardless of whether I believe it or not?"

> *He said I should decipher "propaganda from purpose."*

Who can argue with that? The bottom line question, again, is "Is it true?" And how can we know if something is true or not, apart from information from "outside the box" (the box being the world and our human experience)? That's why we as Christians depend on revelation: God is giving us information from His perspective, outside the box. That's a big way (and the ultimate way) we know whether something is true or not.

> *He studied different religions alongside Christianity such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and even though he didn't buy into them he realized that they were all promoting the same*

> *basic ideas: "The golden rule is in every major religion."*

There's a big difference between all religions sharing a particular element (e.g., the golden rule) and all religions promoting the same basic ideas. We can find some truth in every religion, but that doesn't make the religions themselves true because they don't correspond to reality. Only Christianity corresponds to reality.

I think it's interesting how many people can "study" world religions and come to the conclusion that they're all basically the same. Eastern religion is radically different from Christianity: the concept of reincarnation and karma is vastly different from the concept of one birth, one death, then judgment.

Furthermore, Christianity says "There is no way anyone can get into heaven on their own because only the good and perfect and holy can get in." Other religions, if they even believe in a heaven, depend on their own good works. Christianity says, "We are dead in our sins and separated from God." Other religions say, "Our efforts can overcome our sin." Christianity says, "Jesus Christ is the only way to God." Other religions say, "There are many ways to God." Christianity says, "Christ living inside you is your power source and allows you to live a live pleasing to God." Other religions say, "You're on your own" or, worse, the New Age religions promise the lie, "You ARE god!"

> *Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion.*

First of all, the fact that major religions all have a flood story/myth/legend says something powerful about it being a real event! What's significant to me is that the flood story as recorded in our Bible is the one that Jesus endorsed when He quoted from that Bible, when He talked about Noah as a real

person.

Secondly, about promoting a moral system for promotion: what is that but a system of human works? Why would we be surprised that all religions, which address the subject of morality, would talk about *good* works? Again, though, Christianity is completely different from all other religions in this department. It claims that there is nothing we can do to promote ourselves, to climb any ladder of goodness and morality because we are sinners. "Promotion" comes from accepting Christ's righteousness in exchange for our sinfulness. What a swap! That isn't found in any other world religion—what human would have thought it up???

> *I know I'm kind of jumping around but I hope you'll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, "Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom." It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs.*

Doubt, if it means being openminded to finding or being reassured of the truth, may well be a seeding ground of wisdom. But I am concerned whenever ANY teacher holds up the banner of doubt as "freethinking" as if choosing to continue to believe your beliefs is closeminded and controlled. Please see this teacher as a threat to your faith. God may well be using him to help you build your faith at the same time, but know that the enemy uses disillusioned teachers to destroy students' faith all the time. It's not an accident; it's a deliberate attempt to spread the enemy's poison. It's a spiritual battle, and the teachers and professors are unknowing pawns being manipulated by the enemy in the heavenlies just as surely as if they were marionettes. And ironically, they *think* they're being "freethinkers!"

> *He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible.*

There's nothing wrong with examining SEEMING contradictions.

Usually they come from not seeing the whole picture.

> *Here come some more quotes! "The last line of the Lord's prayer is an addition by a monk."*

And how would he know that?

> *"…Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem"*

Right. Who said there could only be one cleansing of the temple? If John tells of one cleansing, and the synoptic gospels put a cleansing at another time, why does that make it a contradiction instead of an addition?

I'm so proud of you for not being afraid to face the questions. You have nothing to be afraid of. The very power of God is behind the philosophy and words of scripture, which assure you that what you believe is indeed the truth. It will always stand up to your study and hard scrutiny. What may not stand up are your assumptions about things that God never said in the first place, and that's not a bad thing! (For instance: there are people who suffer with their desire to get up and dance to a great, moving, rhythmic song, but they believe—because they've been taught—that dancing is sin. But God never said it was! That's a man-made rule that doesn't stand up under the searchlight of "Hath God said. . .?")

Hang in there! You have all the supernatural assistance possibly available to you!

Love,
Sue

“What About Body Piercing?”

In your latest Probe-Alert you had an interesting commentary on tattoos. I was wondering what your thoughts were about earrings, since they also change the body that God gave us. What about body piercing in general?

Great question!

Earrings are considered a common form of jewelry in the Bible, and there is no condemnation associated with earrings themselves. (Only the desire to adorn oneself with jewelry instead of a beautiful and godly heart, Is. 3 and 1 Pet. 3:3.) In fact, in Ezek. 16 the Lord describes how he treated unfaithful Jerusalem with tenderness and love, dressing her with fine garments and adorning her with all sorts of jewelry, including earrings.

But it’s not just earrings you wonder about, I bet. . . it’s pierced earrings, right? Well, ear piercing is addressed in the Old Testament in a positive way. If a master wants to grant freedom to his servant, “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.” (Exo. 21:6)

Personally, I wonder if the Lord didn’t create earlobes just for decoration. . .??! <smile>

The important thing, though, for a New Testament Christian, is that we don’t live under Old Testament rules anyway, and we have freedom in Christ to do anything that He gives us permission to do. Since there is no prohibition anywhere in the Bible against pierced ears and earrings, then one needs to go by other Biblical principles. For instance, if a girl wants

to get her ears pierced but her parents say no, then the principle of children obeying their parents would dictate that it would be wrong in this instance.

But apart from ear piercing, there is the subject of body piercing. There is no New Testament prohibition against it, and not even an Old Testament prohibition as far as I can tell. There IS a matter of common sense here, though. For instance, the advice columninst "Dear Abby" published a letter from a dentist not long ago warning people against tongue piercing. He said, "Our mouths weren't made to work with metal banging around in them," and that he had quite a number of patients who came in with several broken teeth. Fixing them with crowns is tedious and very expensive, he said, and in his opinion tongue piercing isn't worth it.

Speaking of which, I have a counselor friend who told me that in the beginning of this fad, someone did a study of those who had pierced their tongues, and discovered that 100% of these young people had been sexually abused. That's food for thought. (It's no longer 100%, of course, since now it's a matter of "fashion.")

The biblical principle that would cover body piercing (as well as tattoos), in my opinion, is 1 Cor. 10:23: "'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive." I would suggest that the Christian's responsibility is to ask the Lord, "What would YOU have me to do about this?" And then obey.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries



“The Story of a Couple Who Left an Abusive Church”

Dear Patrick Zukeran,

My wife and I are going through a bad experience in Church at the moment and your Abusive Churches: Leaving Them Behind article has/is really helping us. Thank you.

We are from a city in England called _____.

Three years ago we planted a church with another family, for about two years everything was going well and the church grew in numbers.

My wife and I were elders and my wife was also praise and worship leader. We gave our all to promoting the church even to the point of exhaustion, we were out at least four to five nights per week and as our Pastor taught we were sacrificing everything for the Church.

We met in a community centre and every Sunday we would be the first in setting up all the relevant equipment up, sound equipment etc. We would also be the last out after tidying up etc.

Our Pastor would at times bring us a teaching which was often a rebuke for not doing things according to what he thought was right. We would voice our concerns and opinions and be labelled unteachable and told everything he was saying was in the word of God and we should use it as the final authority in our lives. If we did not then we were rebelling against God.

We would often feel a heaviness in the atmosphere when in his presense. My wife would be told that it was up to her and her worship team to usher in the presence of God and would often be told that there was no anointing on her voice. She would often come home and end up in tears because she could not give anymore.

She led the service once with a broken elbow, another time with a collar around her neck she had pulled her muscles, we were always told we had to sacricfice family time for the church as this was honourable to God and we would be rewarded for our works.

Anyway after almost three years we decided to step down from our positions as elders, we just could not give anymore!!

We were told that we were breaking a spiritual covenant with the pastor and the first lady of the house (his wife) and this had to be done in a way that would cause the least amount of pain and disruption to the church.

I addressed the church and said that we were stepping down from Eldership because God had blessed our business and we did not have the time to serve them any longer, we told them that we did not want to hinder what God was doing and wanted to step aside so that God could raise up new elders to help carry the vision forward, it was very tearful and emotional because

we had planted this church and were about to step down from our position. It was also emotional because we were hurting for everything that we had been through, the constant rebukes etc. The Church applauded us for our service and on the outside everything looked ok, one the inside we felt/feel for the rest of the church and for the well being of the Pastor because he will not take any counsel and the church are absorbed by his character.

On one occasion in a meeting with my wife and me, he walked out because my wife and I said that we felt that the church as a body was not growing because everyone in our church, apart from two people were already Christians and we should concentrate on the lost. We were told that we were so insensitive and how could we hurt his feelings so much.

Anyway enough of our problems and experiences I expect you have heard all this before, again we would like to thank you for helping us through your writings.

See Also: "Probe Answers Our E-Mail":

- "What Advice Would You Give Someone Leaving an Abusive Church?"
- Another Story of a Couple's Heartbreaking Experience with an Abusive Church
- "Does 'Touch Not the Lord's Anointed' Mean that Abusive Pastors Can't be Challenged?"