

“Why Are Children Born Blind?”

I have asked the question of why children are born blind. I get no satisfaction from any of any religious explanation. The fact of the matter is that the Almighty can see but these little children cannot. It is cold comfort to hide behind some doctrine when an innocent child will spend his or her life in darkness.

It's a great question. In fact, God considered it such a good question that it is included in the Gospel of John:

As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. . . .” (John 9:1-3)

So the first answer of why babies are allowed to be born blind is so that God can put His goodness and His power on display through the person's life.

I can imagine that an immediate response might be, “How sadistic and egocentric can you get? Why would a good and loving God allow such pain and distress just to set Himself up to get glory?”

And my response would be, “When we start to understand God as He really is, as majestic and powerful and beautiful and most of all GOOD, we stop pushing back at His actions that reveal His character. Just like we don't raise a fist at the sun and scream, ‘How dare you shine so brightly that I can't look at you without hurting my eyes?! How dare you pour such radiant light into the world that it lights everything up? Stop being so shiny and bright!’”

Another answer is that in the scope of eternity, there are many worse things than being physically blind. It would be far worse to live a life disconnected from God, refusing His invitation to the abundant life Jesus came to give, and enter hell with perfectly working eyes.

I do realize that this may seem callous, which is why I need to tell you that as a survivor of polio paralysis since I was eight months old, I have lived my entire life handicapped. I may as well have been born with a disabled body like a baby born blind. So this question is not a hypothetical, theoretical question. This is my daily life. And I have seen God “display His works in me” (John 9) in many ways not *despite* my handicap, but *because* of it. My very weakness is what allows His strength and joy to shine through me in the weak places.

Jesus went on to say immediately after the above statements that He was the light of the world. The juxtaposition of these two details, I believe, is making a statement: that things that exist in the physical realm point to corollaries in the spiritual realm. Blindness comes in various forms, physical and spiritual and emotional and intellectual, but Jesus is the light that makes all the difference with those kinds of blindness.

I do think it's easier to grasp this truth when we cultivate an eternal perspective, remembering that our life on earth is but a short breath compared to the bulk of our existence that will happen on the other side of death. Blindness, for believers in Jesus, is limited to life on earth. All physical maladies will be restored to perfection in the New Heavens and the New Earth, which means no blindness, no lameness, no illness of any kind in the next stage of life.

You might ask, “But what about babies born blind who don’t become believers in Jesus? What is the point of their blindness then?” It seems to me that the promise of healing and wholeness through a relationship with Jesus could be even *more* appealing to someone born blind. It might be the very best way for them to come to the place where they trust in Christ.

One final comment, addressing your statement that “the Almighty can see but these little children cannot.”

There was a time when the Almighty restricted Himself to a human body while living on earth, leaving all His power and privileges behind in heaven when He took up residence in a young girl’s body. I believe He experienced an even worse kind of blindness than merely physical blindness as He hung on the cross, absorbing all the sin, all the dysfunction, all the sickness, and all the brokenness of life in a fallen world into Himself for three hours. He was so immersed in the horror of a sin-sick world, I believe, that He could no longer “see” or sense His Father—because that’s what sin does, it separates us from God, and the Bible tells us that He actually BECAME sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). No wonder He felt lost in sin’s blindness. (Thus crying out “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”)

So I would respectfully submit that Jesus, the Almighty, very much knows what the deepest kind of blindness feels like. He is Emmanuel, God with us—God who understands what it’s like to be human and live in a broken world. Including blindness.

I do hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Are There Non-Christian Sources Denying Jesus Lived?”

I was just reading Michael Gleghorn’s article *Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources*. Are there any non-Christian sources saying Jesus didn’t live? How reliable are they?

Are there any non-Christian sources agreeing that Jesus did live, but making claims about Him which oppose or contradict what is said in the New Testament?

Thanks for your letter. Yes, on both counts. But notice that my article is dealing with *ancient* evidence for Jesus. This is the best evidence available, for it is closest in time to the actual life of Jesus. Thus, concerning your first question, the non-Christian sources which say that Jesus didn’t live would all be very late. I’m not sure what the earliest such source is, but such sources would not be considered reliable. Such sources occasionally appear in our day, though this is very much a minority opinion among scholars. The fact is, the evidence for the life of Jesus is just too good to be competently denied. Those who deny that Jesus ever lived are really taking an extremely implausible

(and even irrational) position.

Concerning your second question, there are a number of ancient sources along these lines. Such sources are not as ancient as the New Testament gospels or other New Testament documents (e.g. the letters of Paul, Peter, John, etc.). But such sources do exist. For one thing, some of the sources mentioned in my program would fall under this category. Think of some of the things said about Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud or in Lucian. But there would also be sources like the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, Mary Magdalene, Philip, etc, as well as other such ancient sources. Here it's important to note that such sources are not as old as the New Testament documents, which were written in the first century. These documents typically date to the third and fourth centuries—long after the New Testament was written (and long after the writings of Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, etc.). Also, these documents are typically characterized by a Gnostic theology, which presents an unbiblical view of Jesus. The church fathers (teachers and leaders in the early church) were wise to reject these books from the New Testament canon. Although they claim to be written by people like Mary Magdalene, Philip, Thomas, etc., they were not written by the early Christian disciples who bore these names. For more information on these subjects, please see my article [Redeeming the Da Vinci Code](#) for a much fuller explanation.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

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“Why Does God Allow Natural Evils Such as Tsunamis, Hurricanes and Earthquakes?”

My question is about natural evils such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes etc. I feel like the problem of moral evil such as murder and stealing is solved by the free will defense but I haven't heard a good refutation of why God allows tsunamis and other natural events to take out huge villages and kill children.

The so called “natural evils” such as natural disasters are only evil from a human perspective. Tsunamis and earthquakes are normal and necessary occurrences in nature. We could not live on planet earth without them. They shape the environment and contribute to an inhabitable planet. They are part of a normal cycle of nature, along with every other occurrence in nature such as volcanoes, floods and even disease and plague, which is God's way of maintaining balance in the ecology, necessary for human survival. These natural occurrences only become evil when humanity gets in their way. This sometimes has to do with human choices and “moral evil.” For example building huge population centers on known fault lines and danger zones and not taking proper precautions in construction or having an efficient evacuation plan and warning system in place. Humanity cannot do away with the normal cycles of nature because we need a healthy natural environment to live. But we can adjust ourselves to nature in order to mitigate some of its more deadly effects on civilization. New Orleans is the perfect example of human arrogance, neglect and

apathy in the face of known dangers from hurricanes. This city did not take the proper precautions in building a technological defense against hurricanes when it was known for decades that it was in danger of a disaster. The Netherlands is an example of a country that did take the proper precautions in protecting itself from flooding and goes on to survive without incident. So should we blame God for the apathy of New Orleans? This means there is not a strict separation between natural and moral evil and that they are more interwoven than we realize or care to admit.

Now, many times natural disasters are not the result of human choices. We have two options. First, it is a judgment of God. Second, we don't know why, other than saying God has a purpose in this disaster that we don't understand, which is certainly an acceptable choice; that is how the problem of evil is explained in the book of Job. I am not averse to saying natural disasters are a judgment from God. The Bible has no problem calling natural disasters judgments—floods and earthquakes are perfect examples. This does not mean that every natural disaster is a judgment. I am only saying judgment is a possibility.

So there are three possible answers to your question. Natural disasters happen as a result of human choices. They are a judgment of God or they happen for a reason we do not understand.

Feel free to follow up on any of these issues with me if you like.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

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“I Doubt the Existence of a Good God Who Allows a Baby to Suffer and Die”

I came across an analysis of the dilemma confronting theism due to the occurrence of the Holocaust. The very question as to the existence of God remains unsettled for me, and I pose the question whether there is any acceptable “theistic” explanation to the all-too-common scenario of a newborn who suffers an agonizing brief life and dies shortly after birth.

A traditional response to that tragedy usually revolves around the explanation that God is goodness and can only do good. Even though we (with our limited intellects) cannot appreciate it, we MUST have “faith” and or “trust” that even that agonizing death was for the “purpose” of some “greater goodness.” Now while this may be a source of comfort to those who grieve for the baby (parents) the most important fallacy of the argument is that it is IRRELEVANT and of no value to the baby who suffered and died! That baby had neither the opportunity nor the intellectual maturity to reflect on there being some “greater goodness” to his/her suffering—as do those who are fortunate to survive tragedy, illness, the Holocaust. If one ascribes to a theistic belief system, there are numerous unacceptable consequences of this scenario.

1. A God who is omnipotent has chosen to allow that baby to die in suffering without granting him/her the benefit of realizing a “greater goodness.” That God is unacceptable.

2. Traditionally, God is described as not only having created, but that He continues to actively create all things. This is an aspect of Divine Providence. If that is so, then God directly created the suffering of the baby—without any relief. Again, this is an unacceptable God.

3. If one says that God does not have the power to intercede in relief of the baby’s suffering (i.e., God is NOT omnipotent) then of what value is God? Why place one’s trust in God for help in any affairs?

4. If one says that God did NOT cause the suffering, then God is an ineffectual creator, and why should one trust in the ability of God to create goodness, to ensure that the sun rises each day, etc.?

I have not been able to find any source to resolve these “difficulties” and I hope that your organization might provide some insight. I will add that I am Jewish and am very comfortable with that heritage. Being very familiar with Christian theology and respecting its belief system, I respectfully ask that you refrain from any attempts to convert me to another philosophy. Neither Jewish nor Christian theologies offer satisfactory answers. One is reduced (I fear) to the conclusion that God does not exist and that therefore life is essentially meaningless (nihilism). That is a position that I am desperately trying to avoid—as I am currently facing a critical health problem where my knowledge and trust in God’s goodness would be of tremendous, if not life-saving, value.

Thank you for writing. You are well aware that there is no simple, cut-and-dried answer to the problem of suffering vis-à-vis the belief in the God of the Bible. I lay it out that way because, as far as I can tell, it is only in light of such a God that there is a (philosophical) problem at all. In some religions, it is accepted that their deity would be angry at times if, for example, people don’t offer the right sacrifices (the reason Christians were disliked in the early church; their unwillingness to honor the local civic deities or worship the emperor was seen as a threat to their neighbors). Naturalistic atheists have no problem like it within the bounds of their worldview: suffering happens and that’s that. We can work to alleviate it, but there’s no God to be angry at. No, it’s only because the God-honoring people of Israel and Christians believe in a God who is fundamentally good is there a problem at all. In other words, it’s a problem posed to people who believe in an all-good and all-powerful deity who has claimed to be concerned about humankind.

You said you don’t want anyone to try to convert you, and I won’t do that. But you have to understand that religions and philosophies are systematic; they contain a number of beliefs that are interconnected. The current penchant people have for creating cut-and-paste religions is only reasonable if it’s the case that no one can know what’s true about such things, or if it’s been concluded that there really is no transcendent God, and that religion is merely a human invention created to meet particular needs or desires, or simply to offer a mythical explanation of life and the world. Your own religious/philosophical beliefs aren’t clear; I see you’ve rejected Jewish theology as you have Christian. So I’ll take Islam as an example. A Muslim’s beliefs about particular issues that aren’t laid out clearly in the Koran will be reasoned to in light of and in harmony with the nature of Allah as presented in the Qur’an. Those answers will only be acceptable (not just understandable, but acceptable) to a person who agrees on the presuppositions. The same is the case for me and my beliefs as a Christian. While you may not be interested in putting your faith in Christ, my thinking

can only be understood in light of my basic Christian beliefs which are given in the Bible. Now, because there is some overlap in beliefs between different religions (explained in Christian theology by general revelation), it could be that you would find acceptable the picture of God I present if I can make it coherent with respect to suffering. But I'm thinking you will not accept it wholesale because the answer will involve more than just explaining how God could do things He does (or allows things He allows) given what the Bible says about His character; it will involve thinking about how to live with incomplete answers in light of settled answers, primarily regarding the crucifixion of Christ, the Son of God, and what that means for God's interest in us. So I'll aim at at least presenting a big picture that is coherent and understandable in light of the whole system of Christian belief (without, of course, presenting a whole systematic theology!).

To answer your question, I took the opportunity to re-read John Stackhouse's book *Can God Be Trusted?* the title of which, I think, asks the right question. I also scanned a few other books to help me think about the matter. I've read a good bit on the subject, and still find myself hoping I'll find the answer to the dilemma. The fact that there is still no widespread agreement in theological and philosophical circles is good evidence for what so many have said: we simply don't have a final or comprehensive answer to the presence of evil and suffering.

This response will be very long for two reasons. One is that, while the problem of evil and suffering is often posed just to try to make believers in God look stupid, yours is one of the few I've received that shows a genuine interest in thinking the matter through. As such, it deserves a thoughtful response. Second, the problem itself simply can't be dealt with briefly. If you were a Christian who just wanted some reassurance, I could offer that more briefly. Because you apparently are not a Christian, I have to paint a bigger picture in order to situate the main point in a fuller context. And so I step out with a certain sense of fear and trepidation, knowing that the subject can't be dealt with summarily, but also knowing that many words can be like dust in the air, obscuring the view.

You've put me in a rather awkward position for two reasons. For one thing, you don't believe Christian theology has an answer to the problem of suffering, but it's from within that framework that I must obtain the answer (or as much of it as I may). So perhaps all I can do is re-state or possibly add something to what you've already heard. Second, you don't want to be converted. While I have no inclination to engage in any intellectual arm-twisting here, I will conclude that, even though I can make strides toward an understanding of suffering that might make sense to you—one that is consistent and coherent in the framework of Christian doctrine—if it's true it can only apply directly and fully to the person who is in a position to receive it; that is, from a place of faith in Christ. This isn't just a question about the nature of God; it isn't an abstract matter (as you well know because of your own illness). It's also a question of what God is doing in our lives. We're talking about the acts (or apparent lack of acting) on the part of a Person toward people who are connected with Him. I'm not good at analogies, but just to take a shot at one, think of the difference between what one reads in a book about what makes for a good football player and what a specific coach does with the players on his team. The player can only experience the facts he's read in the book by getting on the field. And even then, the generalities of the book will be put into practice on the field differently according to particular circumstances and the wisdom of the coach.

Since I don't know what you believe about "God, man, and the world," I don't know how to even attempt to make sense of suffering within the framework of your worldview. In this matter, one size doesn't fit all, so to speak. My thinking about it will come out of, and be tested by, my larger framework of beliefs as a Christian. What this means is that, from one direction, once the Christian view of life and the world has been accepted as true, the believer's thinking about suffering will have to take into account Christian doctrines. From the other direction—for someone standing apart from Christianity—the sense one can make of suffering in light of Christian doctrine and particular historical events can induce a person to give the broader framework of belief a closer look. So while

I won't try to directly persuade you to become a Christian, I do hope that any light I can shed on the matter will prompt you to give Christ a closer look. That move, from the problem of suffering to the claims of Christ, isn't a forced leap, for the Christian's thinking about suffering has to be addressed in light of the person and work of Jesus.

Your primary motivation for writing, I take it, is your own current experience of illness. When you think about God and what He might be up to or whether He is a safe place in which to rest your hope, you find opposition to that hope coming from a difficult situation: a baby who suffers and dies soon after birth. To find a solution or a resolution in the most difficult cases makes it easier to think there is one for our own situation. So you ask what good can come from such an experience for the baby. He or she can't reflect on the good that has come from the suffering. Nor did the baby experience any greater good resulting from it.

It should be noted up front that the greater good defenses aren't accepted by all Christians. It would be impossible to know whether a greater evil has been prevented or a greater good produced in all experiences of suffering. We do know that good can come from suffering. Jesus learned obedience from the things he suffered (Hebrews 5:8). We read in the Gospel of John that it was necessary for Jesus to die "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (11:49-52). But these sufferings were accepted by the one suffering, a very different situation from that of the suffering baby.

A frequently posed answer to the problem of evil is the free will defense, but there is no way from the illustration you used to know how that would apply. We often distinguish natural evil (such as sickness) from moral evil. However, it isn't always possible to separate the two (which is why one theologian uses the categories of *evil endured* and *evil committed*). Surely there was nothing the baby did to bring about the suffering, but there could have been something the parents or the medical professionals did. One might claim that God should have prevented their blunders (if we can imagine any) from resulting in the child's suffering and death, but we would then have to extend that thinking to all instances where one person's actions harm others. Was the child an AIDS baby? Did her mother engage in promiscuous sex, resulting in her contracting HIV and passing it along to the baby? You may be thinking I'm stretching this all out of shape, but it's important to situate fictitious illustrations into real life types of scenarios for them to be meaningful.

But let's assume the best for the parents and the medical professionals. No one did anything wrong, and the baby wasn't born in a time when a plague was raging. The baby simply suffered the worst of what this fallen world has to offer: suffering for just being born. And short of a message from God, there is no answer to the question why. We mustn't assume, however, that if we don't have the answer, there is no good one. Neither can we conclude that if there is a God He must not be good or powerful enough. The well-known story of Job, accepted as canonical by Jews and Christians, leaves us there with no answer to the why question. God allowed Satan to have his way with Job, a righteous man, and never gave His reason. What He told Job, in short, was that He knew more than Job did, that Job was in no position to tell God He was doing things wrong. (Isn't it peculiar, if this story were simply made up by some people who were inventing a religion, that it would be so inconclusive? Surely a story made up just to take a stab at understanding why good people suffer would offer some kind of answer.) We can't know whether, in the great scheme of things, it was better for the baby's life to be short. Of course, one's perspective on that will be informed by one's worldview. For the naturalist, there is no afterlife, so what we experience here on earth is it, and the early death is simply a tragedy. If there is an afterlife, however, what happens here on earth isn't all there is to it; death isn't the defining end.

Given (and I think it is a given) that there is no authoritative answer to the big question of why God permitted evil and suffering in the first place, nor can it always be discerned why particular

instances of suffering are allowed, what shall we do? No alternative belief will take away the suffering; even if we believe suffering is an illusion, as some religions teach, it's still painful (I prefer my illusions to be pleasant!). So we wonder how to think about life and the world in order to make our suffering easier to abide. What are the options?

We can go the naturalistic route and just believe that there is no purpose behind it all, and do what we can to alleviate suffering. But there's no moral imperative behind that; life is bottom line just a matter of survival. And if there is no God and no moral imperative, why worry about anyone else's suffering besides our own? And regarding our own, there's no one to be mad at. We live, we die, we are annihilated.

But this brings us to a new problem, namely, why it is that suffering and evil make people rage if there is no God at all, if we're all just products of the natural process of conception? Bad things happen. Why keep trying to find an answer? It's hard to settle into an apathetic attitude.

We can go the (atheistic) existentialist route and try to deliver ourselves from this rage by establishing our own meanings. I think of Meursault in Albert Camus' *The Stranger* who murders someone and in prison finds freedom when he settles in his mind that there is no God and no hope. But that's artificial, even if we only take human experience as our guide. There's something in us that makes us think there is indeed more than this life, or, at least, that there ought to be. The afterlife plays a major role in religions in determining how people live this side of the grave. Where does that come from? The Old Testament says that God has put eternity in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11), and human experience bears that out.

We can choose any number of other gods to believe in (besides the one of the Bible), but we won't find much satisfaction. There is a variety of explanations—suffering is an illusion; it results from upsetting the gods; we're caught in an eternal battle of good vs. evil. Mercy and love toward people are not the strong suits of many other religions as they are with Christianity. But that's why we have this problem of evil. We're used to thinking of God in Christian terms, and He doesn't seem to always play by the rules (funny how we like Him to play by the rules by exempt ourselves from them).

We can make up our own notions about God and the world that can make our suffering more livable, but our imaginations waver. A God that is no bigger or more metaphysically fixed than my own imaginings doesn't make for a stable foundation upon which to build a life. What we all want is what is real and can be relied upon, something that doesn't change with our states of mind or emotion.

We can believe in the God described in the Bible but believe He really isn't powerful enough to conquer evil. That isn't much of a God to believe in; we can do better with good medicine and education than with an impotent God.

The best choice in my opinion is take the Bible's description of God as true (that He is all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful) and receive what the Bible has revealed in Jesus about God's concern for us even if He doesn't explain Himself in all matters, and this for a few reasons.

First, the reality of evil does not disprove the reality of the God of the Bible. Maybe we cannot imagine how the all-powerful and loving God could permit suffering, but our lack of understanding does not mean He isn't there. A famous syllogism that has often been used to disprove the God of the Bible is this:

- A good God would want to destroy evil.
- An all-powerful God would be able to destroy evil.

- However, evil is not destroyed.
- Therefore, such a good and all-powerful God cannot possibly exist.

A syllogism like this is only as strong as its premises. The first thing we need to do is substitute “the God of the Bible” or “Yahweh” for “God”. The reason is that we think we know what a good and all-powerful God would want to do and when He would want to do it, but we should rather think in terms of a specific God. This syllogism surreptitiously assumes particular things about God that may or may not be so, or may contain understandings that are hindered by being limited. What would Yahweh want to do and when and how would He want to do it? How would we know? We can only know (in so far as we can know) by seeing what He has revealed to us about Himself. We ourselves can have purposes for the things we do or don’t do that can only be known if we reveal them. Much more is this the case with God.

The fact is that syllogisms can be constructed to “prove” most anything. In fact, they often are used just that way; it isn’t immediately apparent that they assume what is to be proved. Here’s another argument to consider about evil:

- If God is all-good, He will destroy evil.
- If He is all-powerful, He can defeat evil.
- Evil is not yet defeated.
- Therefore, evil will one day be defeated.

(Adapted from Geisler and Feinberg, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 323.)

This argument assumes God exists, which you might think is cheating. But the former syllogism made assumptions that require grounding that isn’t stated.

The fact is that there are good reasons to believe God exists that outweigh the problem of evil. I gather from your email that you do believe God exists. You are questioning whether this is a God worth believing in. This problem can be a major intellectual, emotional, and psychological hurdle, but it doesn’t end the discussion. There are many arguments out there for acknowledging the reality of the one true God, so I won’t go into that discussion here. I’ll just note that you have to admit it’s a very odd situation for there to have been so many people who believed and still believe in God throughout history (and many who have died for their beliefs) despite this problem. And they believe this God is good even despite their own suffering.

My response has grown very long, so I’ll (finally!) get right to the main points.

First, God is a Person whose purposes can’t simply be ferreted out by philosophical conjecture. He has to reveal Himself. We believe He’s done that in Scripture. And in Scripture He hasn’t bothered to explain Himself about everything.

Second, God’s scope of vision is much broader than mine, and it’s His purposes that are being worked out. Philosopher Marilyn McCord Adams noted that “the rationality of a person’s behavior is in part a function of his purposes and his consistency and efficiency in pursuing them” (Adams, “Redemptive Suffering,” in Peterson, ed. *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings*, 184). As some have said, the logic of God’s acts can more resemble the “logic” of a mountain range than a logically organized set of truths. In other words, one cannot start at one end of the Rockies and logically conclude the shape of the mountain range and where it will end. As one flies above the Rockies, one can see how one peak gives way to a valley and then to other peaks and valleys, but one cannot

know all this merely using logic. Similarly, while there are some claims that are clearly contradictory to the nature and promises of God, we have to adopt a wait and see attitude for much of what He does. What we have is the broad framework of creation, fall, redemption, and future glory. In between there are events that we could not predict, nor can we always know how they will fit in the big picture.

Your illustration of the suffering baby doesn't tell enough. I've already broached the question of what might have happened on the human level to bring about the suffering. What came about as a result of the suffering? We don't know that either. Your point was that the suffering didn't help the baby any. I can't see how it could have. However, the baby's death isn't the end of the story. Whatever God's reasons for it, if King David's claim about his son who died in infancy (the child of Bathsheba) applies to all children—that David would go to him after death; i.e., the child would enter the presence of God—then the baby's experience after death would completely overshadow all that came before (2 Samuel 12:15-23). This isn't to try to make heaven a justification for suffering; it's just to say that the game ain't over until it's over, and one has to step back and see the bigger picture before making a final judgment based upon one small part.

Third, God's purposes include providing for our redemption and for ridding the world of evil and suffering. "God shows His love toward us," Paul wrote, "in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). If God really is a "malevolent bully" in the words of Richard Dawkins, why did He send His son to die for our sins and to rid the world of evil? I said earlier that Christians can't give anything approaching a good answer for the problem of evil without taking Jesus into account. The reason is that in him we see God's attitude toward us and toward sin and its ravages, for he is the image of God, God in flesh, who reveals to us the Father (John 14:8-10). And He himself suffered both the rejection of people (which reached its climax in crucifixion) and the weight of the sin of the world as he died. The one who knew no sin was forsaken by the Father for our benefit. Furthermore, he did it to bring an end to the effects of sin: evil and suffering.

Understanding that God is working out purposes bigger than we can know and that they include bringing an end to suffering gives meaning to what we suffer now. We want God to act against such things, but He already has in the best way possible, the way that brings a final solution in a most surprising way. Theologian Henri Blocher offers the metaphor of Jesus as a judo player who uses the strength of the opponent to defeat him:

Evil is conquered as evil because God turns it back upon itself. He makes the supreme crime, the murder of the only righteous person, the very operation that abolishes sin. The maneuver is utterly unprecedented. No more complete victory could be imagined. God responds in the indirect way that is perfectly suited to the ambiguity of evil. He entraps the deceiver in his own wiles. Evil, like a judoist, takes advantage of the power of the good, which it perverts; the Lord, like a supreme champion, replies by using the very grip of the opponent. (*Evil and the Cross*, 132.)

Jesus dealt with sin and its consequences by stepping into the worst it can offer. Writing during World War I, P.T. Forsyth said this: "Our faith did not arise from the order of the world; the world's convulsions, therefore, need not destroy it. Rather it rose from the sharpest crisis, the greatest war, the deadliest death, and the deepest grave the world ever knew—in Christ's Cross" (*The Justification of God*, 57). There won't be an eternal back and forth between the forces of good and of evil. Evil and suffering will end because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

In the meantime (and this is where the personal application fits in), we individually can find meaning

and hope in our own sufferings even if we don't understand it all when we situate ourselves in the grand project of God on earth. Christianity doesn't only offer a particular way of thinking about evil and suffering that can reduce cognitive dissonance; it offers a way to participate in that reality that makes suffering meaningful in our own lives. This shouldn't be taken as implying we are an exclusive club with special rights and privileges that we dole out to those we consider worthy. This is simply how we understand the way things work, and anyone can participate who does what God requires (repent and believe the gospel).

How those "benefits" apply to given individuals, however, varies enormously. Like everyone else, Christians wonder, Why me when others don't suffer this way? Why these obstacles to godly things I want to accomplish? Why must I be a burden on other people? God isn't only concerned with the interests of the person who is suffering, although He certainly is concerned with that person's interests. This is where the testimonies of Christians who have suffered are so meaningful. How is it that these people are able to find joy in life in spite of their hardships? Can they all really be delusional? I cannot myself offer any testimony as one who has suffered. I've lost a sister to cancer, and my wife has arthritis, but I haven't suffered as you apparently are. But I know there are people who've found joy despite the obstacles. (If you are interested in reading about people who've found hope in their suffering, I recommend the books *Where Is God?* by John Feinberg and *When God Weeps* by Joni Eareckson Tada. Tada is a paraplegic and has developed a ministry to people with disabilities.)

The bottom-line question, as I noted at the beginning, is this: Can God be trusted? Given this suffering, now what? If there are other reasons to trust God that outweigh this reason not to, then we must deal with that. It won't do any good to reject God because we don't like what He's doing, because there are consequences to that. We must step into the relationship He has offered and see where He takes us.

I'll draw this tome to an end with a quote from John Stackhouse:

In Jesus we see what we desperately need to see: God close to us, God active among us, God loving us, God forgiving our sin, God opening up a way to a new life of everlasting love. If Jesus is the human face of God, Christians affirm, then human beings have a God who cares, a God who acts on their behalf (even to the point of self-sacrifice), and a God who is now engaged in the complete conquest of evil and the reestablishment of universal *shalom* for all time. If Jesus is truly God revealed, then we can trust God in spite of the evil all around us and in us. (*Can God Be Trusted*, 120).

Because of Jesus, we can have hope. Not the "I hope it rains tomorrow" kind of hope, but hope as understood in the New Testament: confidence in the future based upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, all which demonstrate God's love for us.

If you want to continue the conversation, please do write back.

Rick Wade

Posted August 13, 2012
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“Is It Fair That People Born Into a Christian Home Become Christians and Everybody Else is Doomed to Hell?”

Hey I just read your article on God judging people for sins they didn't know were wrong. It was very good and helped me a lot but I still have a question. My brother is an atheist and we have been having some friendly debates on God and such. And the point he always makes that I cannot get over is when he says that I am a Christian because I was raised in a Christian home (as was he, but he says he fell away when he looked at the facts himself instead of believing just what he was told) so I am Christian. If I was raised in a Muslim home then I would be Muslim. And the same goes for any other religion. He has a good point. If I was raised in an Islamic family I would believe that Allah was the true God. Why was I so lucky to be born into the one right religion? So what is a good counter argument? I would really appreciate your help.

Also, he makes the point that, let's say a kid in North Korea who has passed the age of accountability dies. Does he go to heaven? If so then that means God is letting a non-believer into heaven, right? If he doesn't and goes to Hell, then that seems a little unjust to let a kid who never heard of him go to Hell. Now I know Romans 1:18-32 says that everyone hears of God and I completely believe that and every other word of the Bible, but how can some kid in North Korea or any other given place have nearly as good of a chance as me to get into heaven? I would love any help that you can give me.

Thanks for your letter. These are very good questions. First, let me recommend a very good article by an excellent Christian philosopher that addresses some of your questions. It's entitled, "No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation Through Christ": www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5220. Another helpful piece is this, called "Politically Incorrect Salvation": www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5223.

These articles, which you should probably read at least twice, will help you think through many of these issues at a very sophisticated level.

Here is my own brief response to your questions. This response is not intended to be exhaustive; I've referred you to the articles for a more thorough response.

First, I think that you are quite right that passages such as Romans 1:18-23 clearly teach that God has made His existence evident to all men (we can except, of course, very young children and the severely retarded, etc. Please see an article by Probe's Founder, Jimmy Williams, answering the question if babies go to hell). Since all men are the recipients of God's revelation in nature and conscience, they are morally responsible and accountable to Him for how they respond to this revelation. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these people reject God's revelation and they have no one but themselves to blame for this. It's very important that we always bear this in mind. God has made His existence evident to all men, but the vast majority simply reject this evidence—and for this, each is personally accountable to God.

Now, although God is very gracious, and will often send more revelation even to those who reject the revelation they've already been given, He is under no obligation to do so. If people reject the revelation which God has given, He is not in any way obligated to give them more. They are responsible for what He has given, and what He has already given is more than sufficient for them to know that God exists and that they are morally accountable to Him.

But what if someone in an Islamic country or North Korea were to respond positively to God's revelation in creation and conscience? In that case, I think that we can safely say (on the basis of such passages as Acts 8:26-40 and Acts 10) that anyone who responds positively to God's general revelation, will be given yet more revelation (just as the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius the centurion were—both of whom became Christians, by the way!).

In other words, God has provided everyone with enough revelation to respond to Him in a positive way. For those who do, God will provide yet more revelation (including the gospel of Jesus Christ). But for those who do not, He is under no obligation to provide yet more light to those who reject what He's already given.

For a much more thorough explanation, please refer to the articles I mentioned. You can find more by William Lane Craig here: www.reasonablefaith.org

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted May 28, 2012

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“Can You Recommend Apologetics Resources on Different Levels?”

As a Christian, I find it to be of invaluable importance to remain current and educated in fields of history, science, logic and philosophy, etc. At age 20, I'm confronting more and more difficulty sharing Christ with a generation in a secularized society that will less and less have Him. Any books you might recommend? Thank you!

There are many good books and websites which address the concerns you have in one way or another. However, let me recommend two books and three websites that have personally been very helpful to me over the years.

1. An excellent popular-level book on apologetics and evangelism is *I'm Glad You Asked* by Ken Boa and Larry Moody - available [here](#).
2. A superb intermediate-level apologetics book is *Reasonable Faith* (3rd edition) by William Lane Craig - available [here](#).
3. An excellent popular-level website on apologetics is the Probe Ministries website [here](http://Probe.org): Probe.org.

4. An excellent scholarly-level site (with some popular-level material) is the Reasonable Faith site here: www.reasonablefaith.org.

5. Finally, a really great site for biblical and theological issues is bible.org.

I hope these resources prove helpful as you continue to prepare yourself to give an account to all who ask about the hope that you have in Christ!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

Posted 2012
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“Can You Recommend Resources for Sharing Christ in a Secular Society?”

Hello, Mr. Gleghorn! I want to thank you for what you do. As a Christian, I find it to be of invaluable importance to remain current and educated in fields of history, science, logic and philosophy, etc. Age 20, I'm confronting more and more difficulty sharing Christ with generation in a secularized society that will less and less have Him. Any books you might recommend? Thank you!

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www.amazon.com/Glad-You-Asked-Depth-Difficult/dp/B004IEA2Z2/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1323708380&sr=8-1

2. A superb intermediate-level apologetics book is *Reasonable Faith* (3rd edition) by William Lane Craig:

www.amazon.com/Reasonable-Faith-3rd-Christian-Apologetics/dp/1433501155/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1323708509&sr=1-1

3. An excellent popular-level website on apologetics is the Probe Ministries website here: www.probe.org

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5. Finally, a really great site for biblical and theological issues is this: bible.org

I hope these resources prove helpful as you continue to prepare yourself to give an account to all who ask about the hope that you have in Christ!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted Dec. 26, 2011

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“There is No Proof Your Pathetic Manmade God Ever Lived”

There is not one proof that Jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g*dd*mn fools. Yeshu was real and lived one hundred years before your concocted fake savior. There was jesus of gamala who was another savior. There was jesus bar kochba, yet another savior. Josephus never wrote that passage about jesus and only a f*ing fool would believe it was anything other than another ‘christian’ lie and forgery. Josephus was a Jew and would have been stoned to death for such a statement. You people lie like dogs and couldn’t tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him. Hell, man don’t you think with all his miracles and dead people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it. History is completely silent on all the major bible characters, including the child raping killer Moses and the pimp Abraham. Thank goodness, for you couldn’t find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b*stard that I wouldn’t allow in my neighborhood. Why don’t you try the truth for a change?**

I am sorry that our material has caused you to respond with such negative emotion.

But if I may, I’d like to engage some of your points.

There is not one proof that jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g*dd*mn fools.

This is a fairly broad generalization. Could you refer to something specific so we can get a better idea of what you object to most?

Yeshu was real and lived one hundred years before your concocted fake savior. There was jesus of gamala who was another savior. There was jesus bar kochba,

yet another savior.

Do you have some documentation for these various Jesus characters so we can research ourselves? This is a commonly held notion but the documentation we often see is not reliable.

Josephus never wrote that passage about Jesus and only a fing fool would believe it was anything other than another 'Christian' lie and forgery. Josephus was a Jew and would have been stoned to death for such a statement.***

Concerning Josephus, Michael [Gleghorn] clearly indicates that the second passage he refers to by Josephus was likely edited by a Christian scholar to include the references to Jesus as the Christ and other messianic phrases. Most scholars regard the rest of the passage as genuine.
www.probe.org/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources/.

You people lie like dogs and couldn't tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him.

Can you provide us a list of a few of these authors/historians? You have to consider that any news did not travel very far or very fast in that era. Many of Jesus' miracles would be beyond belief for many and would have just been dismissed. It makes sense therefore, that Jesus was noted a few decades later when the number of his followers continued to grow despite severe persecution.

Hell, man don't you think with all his miracles and dead people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it.

I agree with you to a degree. Jefferson and Franklin were likely deists who used the Bible when it suited them. George Washington however, seems to be a genuine Christian. Do you have sources who indicate otherwise?

History is completely silent on all the major Bible characters, including the child raping killer Moses and the pimp Abraham.

Well, that's not exactly true. Roman and Jewish historians make reference to Jesus and Christians in the first century. Also a stone from around 800BC contained the phrase "House of David." Babylonian records refer to the appropriate kings of Judah in the early years of the Babylonian captivity, both those left in Jerusalem and those taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is real as are the accounts of various Assyrian kings mentioned in Chronicles and Kings. The Babylonian and Persian kings are accurately reflected in Daniel. It's quite unlikely to find any archeological references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were nomadic herders who didn't keep any history.

Thank goodness, for you couldn't find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b*stard that I wouldn't allow in my neighborhood. Why don't you try the truth for a change?

We are looking for the truth and confidently believe we have found it in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I suspect that something else besides your perceived lack of evidence is driving the strength of your rejection. Whatever that may be, I am truly sorry that some Christian or group of Christians have grievously harmed you in some way in the past. No true Christians ever claim to be perfect or to have exhaustive knowledge. But we have seen and experienced the truth in ways that are quite convincing.

Respectfully,

Raymond G. Bohlin, Ph.D.

<https://sites.google.com/site/yahwehelohiym/sons-of-god/the-boundaries-of-the-nations>

Yahweh was just a hateful petty tribal god and one of the many sons of el elyon, the most high god, and your bible proves it but you people do not understand what the hell you read and keep the lies going.

I'm afraid your source is a bit behind the times. While some of what he says is correct, that some names of God go back to the Ugaritic language, his/her reliance on the Documentary Hypothesis is outdated. www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/09/24/the-documentary-hypothesis.aspx#Article

"Sons of God" appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, in Genesis 6:2,4 and Job 38:7. In each case it is either a reference to men who followed God (Genesis 6) or angels (Job 38). Nothing new or damaging here.

If you just look a little further in the Old Testament you find Isaiah saying;

I am the Lord, I have no peer,
there is no God but me.
I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me.
I do this so people will recognize from east to west
that there is no God but me;
I am the Lord, I have no peer.
Remember what I accomplished in antiquity!
Truly I am God, I have no peer;
I am God, and there is none like me (45:5-9)

The God of the Bible is a monotheistic God throughout. And we do have a nearly complete Book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the only difference with the Masoretic text of AD 900 is a few spelling changes.

One item at a time.

www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/buckner_ncn.html

I also advise you to read *Liars for Jesus* and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Paine helped word our Constitution and Bill of Rights and named this country The United States of America. Few Christians will speak about his book because it cannot be refuted intelligently. His part 3 proves there are NO OT prophecies of Jesus and makes jackasses of anyone who says otherwise. Can you people read? Christians don't follow the doctrine of Jesus, they follow the apostate liar Paul. Read the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* to find the Lord's Prayer and the so-called ten commandments along with many other items the murdering Jews (who are not Jews but are liars from the synagogue of Satan) stole and created their rotten religion. Much of what they stole was from the ancient Sumerians who lived about 1000 years before the Hyksos came to be known as Hebrews. Their epic of creation was used by these maggots to create the most bloody and perverted religion this world has known, until Christians showed up.

Hmmm. I don't recall claiming that the U.S. is a Christian nation. You won't find that anywhere on our website. But do read from George Washington's farewell address:

Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Clearly he doesn't say what religion, but there was little else in America at that time except for different forms of Christianity. Even if he only means a loose form of deism, he clearly questions that government can function for long without it.

So you really want to use Thomas Paine as your source for the conviction that there are no OT prophecies about Jesus? There is so much we didn't know in the late 18th century. Archaeology was barely a fledgling science. So many manuscripts were unknown. We have thousands of OT and NT manuscripts today that Paine had no knowledge of whatsoever. Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 is about as clear a prophecy of Jesus that you will find. And remember we have a complete copy of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, well before Jesus lived.

Liars for Jesus looks like an interesting book. I have no doubt there has been sloppy scholarship on the part of many in the religious right. At Probe Ministries we make every effort to research with integrity and write with a biblical reasonableness and respect for those we disagree with.

Two of the foremost and revered Jewish Archaeologists in Israel have proven the OT is a lie but preachers will never tell that. They are greedy dogs and deceivers.
www.hiddenmysteries.org/mysteries/history/jehovah.html

I am familiar with the archaeologists you mention and their conclusions are quite controversial. Archaeology comes with a need for publicity to help donors and foundations continue your funding. Making such an outrageous claim would certainly get headlines and keep the dollars flowing.

I'm not surprised that there are "official" documents declaring that YHWH had Ashterah as a consort. The Jewish histories of the Bible are filled with condemnation for continuing to worship in the high places and using Ashterah poles for fertility. They did indeed worship many gods at times. The Bible doesn't hide that.

But again, this document refers to the Documentary Hypothesis and the P source. This has been debunked for decades but is still used in many secular universities because it fits their predetermined conclusions about biblical texts.

By the way, you can find documentation for the House of David inscription here:
www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/category/archaeology/.

Also we do have the oldest form of writing from Tell Mardikh, the Ebla Tablets. These date to between the 26th and 23rd centuries BCE. There are names, of places, people, and customs similar to those found in Genesis. If Genesis was supposedly written in the 7th century BCE as many claim, these names, places and customs could not be known.

evidenceforchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/11/ebla-tablets-ancient-sumerian.html

Elba Tablets?! Ha, your man was long ago discredited. You must keep up.

www.infidels.org/library/modern/james_still/reliability.html

Everything the so-called jews have or ever had was stolen from other cultures. It is easy to understand why those horrid creatures have been tossed out of every nation they tried to infiltrate with their money making schemes and corruptions. They were the central bankers our founders hated and tried to keep out of this nation. The Presidents who came against them were assassinated. Jackson managed to survive the attempts they made on his life but they still managed to gain the upper hand again and now the swine damn near own this entire nation. The only method used to gain control of Palestine was more lies. Go figure. You don't have a clue what is even happening in this world and who is in control.

I don't think Mr. Still refutes much of anything about the Ebla Tablets. He admits that Pettinato is a Sumerologist and therefore will have skills of translation. The only quibble Mr. Still seems to have with Pettinato is his claim to find the name Yah, similar to Yahweh. OK fine, he just offers another opinion. He says nothing about the names of the cities on the plain. He lost almost all credibility with me in his opening three paragraphs, claiming that Christianity is just a faith and mystery religion according to Paul. Then says Josh McDowell's theology is in tension with this since McDowell wants an inerrant scripture based on facts. Sorry, I don't see any tension at all. Paul refers to actual events in his letters, things that happened to him and things he learned from the apostles. Paul is the one in

1 Corinthians 15 who puts a lot of weight on the historical resurrection. There's no tension. He's making mountains out of ant hills.

His account of how the gospels came about is some shoddy tying together of weird threads. The so-called "Q" document does not exist. It is only supposed to exist because it fits this model. He refers to some of the church fathers to back up some of his points but not to the early tradition among those same church fathers that Mark was written by Mark from Peter's recollections. Luke is indeed an historian. Still's confusion over the middle chapters is not worth responding to. Most conservative scholars now suggest that all the gospels were written before AD 70 because none of them mention the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple when Jesus specifically predicts this in all three synoptic gospels. It would be easy to add this as an editorial proof that Jesus got it right. Especially if these gospels were supposedly cobbled together from sayings and other recollections.

Last, I really liked the part about Jesus waving a magic wand over Lazarus in the catacombs indicating they saw him as a magician. I haven't actually seen the picture though I looked for one. Found a few articles stating the same but no documentation. I suspect that it's another Everest out of an ant hill.

I'm still working on the Thomas Paine refutation of messianic prophecies. Not terribly impressed though. As suspected some of his objections no longer hold up. He also assumes away the supernatural so when Isaiah refers to the Persian Cyrus who wasn't even born in Isaiah's time, he uses that to say that obviously Isaiah was written after 500 BCE. It's bad form to assume away what you are trying to discredit.

Funny how you keep claiming that men like Paine just assume things while he at least existed and that is more than you can say about your bible supermen. It would be one thing to have one of these paragons of virtue (not) to disappear but to have the great majority of them to vaporize from all historical records should wake up even the village idiot. I guess when a man makes his living off conning the sheeple he will stand by his deception until the end. Religion is now a trillion dollar a year BUSINESS. That is like waiting for a used car salesman to tell the buyer to be ware, there may be something wrong with his intended purchase. If Christians really claim the bible is the word of god they must really be confused about what the book says since there are over 3000 sects of Christianity and they disagree on many points. If god is not the author of confusion he sure messed up with his only written word to man. Not only is the bible a mess of contradictions and falsehoods, it is by far the filthiest and bloodiest book ever penned by man. You claim the Creator of this entire world had any part of that filth and to me that is where blasphemy truly is found. You are obviously rooted in lies or you are just taking advantage of brainwashed people to make a living. Either way, you will never open your eyes. Enjoy the holiday of greed and materialism with the rest of the Christian world.

Your hatred blinds you at least as much as you would say my faith blinds me.

I will readily admit that much that passes for Christianity indeed is little more than business. But I would say you are guilty of following the old adage of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. We're not all liars, cheats and frauds.

Jesus did/does exist.

He indeed fulfilled dozens of OT prophecies about the Messiah.

Performed signs and miracles beyond the plain ability of a simple magician, control over nature that frightened even his own disciples, raised a man dead for four days, healed a man blind from birth.

He died for my sins and for yours.

His historical resurrection proved his claims of deity and opened the door for all who call Him Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, will be saved. Ten of eleven disciples died a martyr's death, believing all that they saw and heard was real.

You are following the imaginations of those who are guilty of seeking to destroy what they simply don't like. Besides, as the evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane said, "If my brain is simply composed of atoms, and my thoughts are simply the interaction of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose my brain to be composed of atoms" (loose paraphrase). In a fully materialistic universe, there is no truth, no way to truly know what is real; truth is simply what works, for the moment. Truth is indeed relative and ultimately unknowable. So why bother with your crusade? If some choose to belief a benevolent fiction, what do you care? Obviously you do care, you believe some things to be true and false. I only observe that you need to borrow from a Christian worldview to do so.

Pascal's wager is still worth considering; if I am wrong and death is the end and there is no afterlife, I've lost nothing. I've lived a good life, loved my wife and kids, kind to my neighbors, supported an Indian boy, and help give others hope. If you're wrong, you lose everything.

I will enjoy the celebration of the Incarnation that the now secular culture of the USA has turned into a necessary economic ritual. My family will enjoy a very modest Christmas.

I hope you can enjoy some time with friends or family during this end of year.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ray Bohlin

Posted Dec. 26, 2011

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“What Do You Make of the Announcement That Noah's Ark Has Been Found?”

Bill Crouse, a former Probe staff member and Ark hunter, has been studying this issue for years, including making several trips to Mt. Ararat. Here is his assessment of the announcement:

Noah's Ark Discovered Again?

Bill Crouse and Gordon Franz

April 29, 2010

The discovery of Noah's Ark was announced last Sunday (4/24/10) by a Chinese organization from Hong Kong (Noah's Ark Ministries, International). The problem with this is that it seems like the "discovery" of Noah's Ark is getting to be almost an annual event. What in the world is going on? We think it's a question that is easy to analyze. Genesis 1-11 is the most attacked portion of Scripture for its historicity. Finding an antediluvian artifact like Noah's Ark could be the greatest archaeological discovery ever. It evokes many wannabe Indiana Joneses to search for Noah's Ark. We see no problem with this quest, and would welcome such a discovery. *The problem is not in the finding of the Ark, but in its substantiation.* Amateur archaeologists can and do find things that turn out to be fantastic discoveries. Witness the treasure hunter, Terry Herbert, in Staffordshire, England, who recently found a huge cache of Saxon gold artifacts that was reported in *National Geographic*. However, to properly document a discovery, the proper scientific protocol must be followed. Scientists are trained to gather and analyze evidence. They then publish their research so that other scientists can test their results. These "Indiana Joneses" invariably do not do this. They put the cart before the horse by holding a spectacular press conference declaring what they discovered rather than publishing their results in a scientific journal. The news media, on the other hand, is all too eager to comply for what gets good ratings, and at the same time put evangelical Christians in a bad light.

This Hong Kong group claims they are 99.9 % sure that the wood they found belongs to the Ark of Noah. Since we have spent a few thousand hours digging into the subject of the Noah's Flood and the Ark, we have the following questions about the alleged discovery:

1. When archaeologists make a discovery they must be able to prove exactly where they took their specimen out of the ground. How do we know this video showing the rooms was filmed where they said it was?
2. It is claimed that this discovery was found in an ice and rock cave on Agri Dagh, also known as Mt. Ararat. It is a known fact among geologists that nearly all of the icecap on this mountain consists of moving ice, that is, glacier. A glacier is a river of ice which flows down the mountain. Any wooden structure inside this ice would be ground to bits from the glacial action. In their news releases they have reported this site to be at 13,000 feet and in another report at around 14,000. With these altitudes it would have to be on the ice cap or at the very edge.
3. Most geologists believe this mountain was formed in relatively recent times, i.e., after the Flood. It is a complex volcano with no clearly discernible layers of sedimentation that would have been laid down by flood waters.
4. The group claims they have had the wood carbon dated by a lab in Iran with the results being almost 5000 years old (with the Flood occurring about 3000 B.C.). Why did they have the wood tested in Iran, we ask? Will other scientists have access to the lab results? Are there any good labs in Iran that can do this kind of testing? Or, was the wood tested in Iran because the lab results might be harder to trace by other scientists? Why wasn't a lab in the United States or the United Kingdom used? Just asking!
5. Is this wood coated with pitch (bitumen)? The Bible says God instructed Noah to treat the wood with pitch, either asphalt or pine pitch (Gen. 6:14). At least some of this wood should test positive for this coating. Also, has a botanist examined the wood to determine what kind of wood it is?

6. What about motives? Only God knows their true motives, but it sure makes one nervous when these groups looking for the Ark are planning a documentary video so early in the project before any truth claims are established. One of the members of this Chinese group just happens to be a filmmaker. Most readers interested in this subject probably notice that about once a year a new docudrama about Noah's Ark appears on one of the cable channels. They would not keep doing this if they didn't make money. Hopefully, this group's motives are other than financial.

7. What are the plans to publish this material in scientific peer-reviewed archaeological and geological publications? We would have hoped that this would have been primary to a news conference and videos. True archaeological is not forwarded by this sequence, but we certainly understand their excitement and the desire to be the first to report such a discovery.

In addition to the above questions, we have some reasons to question the integrity of this discovery for the following reasons:

1. This group had a local guide who is a known for his deceit and fraud. It is this guide who initially informed the Chinese group that he knew the location of the Ark in 2008. However, since then he has led them to more than one location. The first location was a cave at a low altitude, a small cave with a tree growing in front! Apparently the current cave is at the 13,000 or 14,000 foot level on the icecap.

2. The specimens taken from this first cave (at the lower altitude) were claimed to be petrified wood from the Ark. In actuality, they were nothing than volcanic tuff.

3. In one of the photos of the rooms straw is seen on the floor and even a spider web in one of the corners. Really! Do spiders live at 13,000 or 14,000 feet? Can they survive the freezing temperatures?

4. There is a real problem with evangelists (which is what they claim to be) who use this kind of discovery to prove the Bible, and hence convince non-believers of its authority, when in fact the truthfulness of the discovery had not been established. I [Bill Crouse] know firsthand of one "Indiana Jones" who spoke eloquently and emotionally about his adventures, and when he gave an invitation at the end of his presentation, many in the audience stood up to commit their lives to Christ. When the speaker was confronted about the truthfulness of some of the stories he told that night, he replied: "But look how many stood up to receive Christ." This becomes very problematic when at some point the convert learns the real truth. They often become very embittered about all things Christian, and understandably so.

5. There seems to be more than the usual gullibility here in that the Hong Kong group was warned about this local guide who has led others astray. We say usual gullibility, because it seems to be a characteristic of some ark-hunters as well, in that they tend to uncritically accept all the local lore. While many of these ark-hunters mean well, it seems that they want to believe every report seemingly at all costs; putting everything through a rational grid often is avoided as being too skeptical.

At this point we are skeptical of these new claims but would rejoice in the end if they proved to be true. If this someday is the case, we will be the first to apologize for our doubts. We would strongly

urge the Hong Kong group to follow proper scholarly procedures and publish this material in scientific, peer-reviewed archaeological and geological publications so that the scholarly community can examine the material first hand and critique it in order to offer helpful, and constructive, criticism. For the person in the pew, we caution you to not get too excited about something that is at best, unsubstantiated; and at worst, a fraud perpetrated by an enterprising local guide!

The authors are both members of the Near East Archaeological Society and the Evangelical Theological Society. We both believe that Noah was a real historical person and that the Flood was a literal event in space-time history. In our own research we came to a different conclusion about the landing place of the Ark. Nothing we have seen so far causes us to doubt or change our position. If you care to read of our research it can be found at www.rapidresponsereport.com.

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“I Need a Response to ‘The God Delusion’”

My atheist friend is a tough atheist to talk to, because he’s read so much philosophy and anti-God literature. He’s really into *The God Delusion*. I wondered if you are familiar with it, and if you know a good response to its assertions.

We don’t have an article on our website, but I can recommend several online responses to Richard Dawkins’ book:

Is God a Delusion?

www.gotquestions.org/God-delusion.html

William Lane Craig’s Q&A: “What do you think of Richard Dawkins’ argument for atheism in *The God Delusion*?”

www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5493

Flew Speaks Out: Professor Antony Flew reviews *The God Delusion*

www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/flew-speaks-out-professor-antony-flew-reviews-the-god-delusion.htm

Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Richard Dawkins’ Failed Rebuttal of Natural Theology

www.arn.org/docs/williams/pw_goddelusionreview2.htm

(this one is long but thorough for a web-length article)

To treat someone like your friend with respect, this means familiarizing yourself with the responses to Dawkins’ arguments so you can speak to him personally about specific issues in the book rather than handing him an article or a book. (I put myself in your friend’s shoes: if a committed atheist wanted to disabuse me of my silly belief in God and the Bible and handed me *The God Delusion*, telling me to read it, I wouldn’t do it. I have enough to do without reading something I’m not motivated to do. And in fact I have books on my shelf still unread because that method doesn’t work! But if this person met me for coffee and talked to me about specific issues, that would make a difference. I’d make sure to do my homework to able to “give an answer for the hope that is within” me [1 Peter 3:]).

Hope you find this helpful. The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue Bohlin

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