“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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"Why Do Asians Not Accept Evidential Apologetics?"

Dear Pat,

I have a question for you. When you were here in the Philippines you mentioned that evidential type apologetics is not suited for Asian/Eastern minds. Am I correct? If so, how do you characterize an Asian mindset in contrast to western mindset? What type of apologetics will suit the Asian mindset?

Evidential apologists include scholars such as Gary Habermas and Josh McDowell. These are fine scholars and the evidentialist approach is a fine approach. They usually begin with the resurrection of Jesus and once they prove Jesus is the divine Son of God, they then proceed to build their case for Christianity from there. Since many in the East are pantheist, they often conclude that Jesus is another holy man and will add them to their pantheon of gods or holy men who

have attained enlightenment. I believe the most effective approach is *classical apologetics*. We must first show we live in a theistic universe. Once you show we live in a theistic universe, then the worldview of pantheism is false. From there we show that God uses miracles to confirm His message and His messengers. Then we can show Jesus is the unique Son of God through His miraculous life, death and resurrection. I believe the best place to start is at worldviews before we go on to Christian apologetics.

Pat Zukeran

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"You Condemn All Other Religions!"

I agree with there is one true God but in all the pages I have read on this site, I find that you are condemning all the other religions. But in my studies I have seen all religions have the same basis of love, peace, and understanding, and the belief that how you act on earth determines how you will spend eternity. But it's cocky religious people that spend their weeks living the way they want but then condemning others for living the way they see unfit and breaking the laws they're supposed to live by. Correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't the Catholic Church Bible say "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone," and seeing how it also says sex is a sin then doesn't that mean we all have sinned by being born and should not judge? But the religious people of the world constantly judge and they are hypocrites for cramming one religion down other people's throats.

Dear _____,

It is true that various world religions all address concepts like love, peace, and understanding. But that doesn't mean they have the same basic concepts. The various world religions are extremely different in their core beliefs. It's also true that we take the unpopular position that biblical Christianity is the only way to know God in this life, and the only way to live with Him in heaven after death. But the reason we take that position is because Jesus Himself made the claim, outrageous if it's not true, that He is God, that He came from heaven, and that He is the only way to God the Father: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me." That claim is absolutely CRAZY unless He really is God, and He really is the only way to be reconciled to God. Since He said He would be put to death and would come back to life, and then He did, He backed up His claim.

So we believe Him.

It's not just the Catholic Church's Bible that says "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (all versions say that), but it's important to understand the context of Jesus' statement. It doesn't mean we are not to judge at all, it means we are not to point fingers at someone else's sin when we are guilty of the same thing. I'm afraid you have a misunderstanding about the Bible's statements about sex. God doesn't say sex is a sin. He invented sex and gave it to us as His gift, to be contained within the only safe place for it: marriage. Sex outside of marriage is sin; sex within marriage is His good gift to be enjoyed. Being conceived during sex (which has always been God's good plan) is not what makes us sinners; we are all sinners because we inherited a "bentness" for sin from our first father, Adam. This has nothing to do with sex.

I appreciate that you're bothered by religious people attempting to cram their beliefs down the throats of anyone

else. Based on what I know of God's heart from reading all of His words, I think He's bothered by it too. He offers a quality of abundant life on earth, and the promise of life in heaven with Him, but He also says it is our choice to accept His offer or not. Nowhere in the Bible is there any hint that cramming religion is acceptable. That's because God wants to be in a love relationship with us, and force or manipulation are opposites of love.

See _____, all of us have a sin problem. We are sinners, and God is a holy God. Our sin keeps us from having a relationship with Him, and God can't allow any sin into heaven when we die. The different world religions have different solutions to the sin problem. Some of them deny that it exists, then they have a real problem explaining events like 9/11. Others suggest that enough good works can outweigh our sins, but they offer no proof that this is true—or even hint at how many is "enough." That's a terrible thing to be wrong about! We believe that because Jesus provided proof that He is God, we can trust what He said about being reconciled to God the Father through Himself as the only way.

I hope this helps. . . and I am sending this with a prayer that you will carefully consider the same question Jesus asked when He was on earth: "Who do you say that I am?"

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

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“Christianity Is Getting Creamed by Islam Apologetics!”

Lately I’ve been looking up things on Islam and Christianity, and it seems like Christianity is getting creamed by Islam apologetics. I mean, there are websites which show amazing scientific accuracies in the Qur’an, like the origin of the universe. They even attack the accuracy of the Bible and talk about the “contradictions.” I beg you to please help me. I mean, they do make a lot of good cases for Islam. Why shouldn’t I believe Islam is the true faith?

Scientific accuracy does not necessarily prove a book is divinely inspired. It simply shows it has some accurate facts. There are numerous books that are scientifically accurate but we would not view them as inspired. The Bible also has numerous scientific accuracies. I have read many of the alleged contradictions in the Bible. Most passages cited are out of context, misinterpreted, or the science of textual criticism is misunderstood. The Bible is inspired in its original documents, not the copies. We have accurate copies but the few discrepancies we have do not affect any major doctrines. This is different from the Qur’an which claims to be perfect, the copy we have now, they claim, is a perfect reflection of what is in heaven.

What is interesting is that there are several errors in the Qur’an. Here are a few scientific errors: Sura 86:5-7 states that sperm comes from a man’s chest. Sura 23:14 says man was created from a blood clot.

There are also several historical errors. Sura 20:85-95 states the Samaritans tricked Moses and the Israelites during the Exodus. The Samaritans did not exist till about 1000 years

later. One big error is that Islam denies the death and resurrection of Jesus which is one of the best documented events in ancient history. On what basis do they deny this? We have too much evidence for this event. These errors put the inspiration of the Qur'an in question.

For more information please read my articles: Jesus in the Qur'an, The Historical Reliability of the Gospels, and The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?.

Patrick Zukeran

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"How Do I Know the Bible is True?"

How do I know that the Bible was true, since I base my faith on it? Why weren't some books canonized?

Great question! We have several articles that will help you with answers.

Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?
www.probe.org/are-the-biblical-documents-reliable/

Authority of the Bible:
probe.org/authority-of-the-bible-a-strong-argument-for-christianity/

The Inspiration of the Bible:
www.probe.org/the-inspiration-of-the-bible/

The New Testament: Can I Trust It?
www.probe.org/the-new-testament-can-i-trust-it/

The Christian Canon:
www.probe.org/the-christian-canon/

You will be especially interested in this answer to email: *"How Did the Church Recognize Which Books Were Inspired By God?"*
www.probe.org/how-did-the-church-recognize-which-books-were-inspired-by-god/

So glad you wrote!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries Webmistress

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"How Do You Witness to an 'Ex-Christian'?"

How do you witness to an "ex-Christian" – someone who claims that they tried Jesus Christ and "He didn't work"?

I would suggest asking gently probing questions in hopes of getting the person's story. Usually this means they had unrealistic expectations to begin with. It also often means they were expecting a linear kind of "A causes B" relationship, similar to "I drink Red Bull, and I get a buzz of energy" or "I take an antibiotic and I get better." In our culture, it's easy to see Christianity as a sort of cosmic vending machine where we put in our "coins" of going to church, reading the Bible, asking God for what we want through prayer, giving money. . . and expecting Him to give us what we want in return.

But biblical Christianity doesn't work that way, because biblical Christianity is a personal relationship with the living God who is totally other-than, totally different from us; a God who is a gentle shepherd and a consuming fire all at the same time. It requires us to surrender; it requires trustful obedience of One we cannot see, touch, or hear.

No wonder our puny human expectations don't "work" with this kind of God!

Many times, people who have chunked their faith, or who "tried Jesus and He didn't work," have run up against the problem of pain and evil. This is the big issue that is the single biggest stumbling block for most people who have problems with belief in Christ. God allowed something to happen that caused them pain, and they are upset with Him for that. They blame God for not protecting them from pain and sorrow. And their hurt and disappointment with God deserves to be heard and affirmed. It matters to God, so it MATTERS! And we can be God's channel for communicating that assurance.

So I suggest you ask questions such as, "I'd love to hear your story of how you came to that conclusion." And, "What were you expecting in 'trying Jesus'?"

Really, you're asking for help in understanding the underlying heart issue, and then be sure to express a sincere concern for whatever they tell you.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

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“I’m Doubting the Truth of the Bible and God’s Existence”

I was wondering about some matters pertaining to truth, specifically the truth of the Bible and existence of God. I’ve grown up in Arkansas in the bible belt my entire life and of course of been surrounded by churches, christianity, and an unquestioning world view that God exists and the bible is the truth.

Recently, I’ve started questioning reality and my perception of the world. I know it is dangerous to get caught up in humanly philosophies and crap like that, but a lot of things don’t make sense to me about God. I’m trying to look at truth from all perspectives so I’ve been reading this book called *The God Delusion*. I know you might say I’m crazy and I’m going to be completely disillusioned by some stupid science and philosophy, but some of what it says doesn’t seem to be completely crazy. Right now, specifically I’m struggling with contradictions that the Bible seems to present. I’m wondering whether all the Gospels are in agreement as to the birth of Jesus. I’m sure there are several other contradictions that atheists would point out also. If you could address some of those and give me another viewpoint.

Thanks for your letter. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to think carefully about what you believe and why. There’s also nothing wrong with reading Dawkins’ book, *The God Delusion*—although many serious scholars don’t think very highly of his arguments or condescending attitude. For a good critique of Dawkins’ book, you may want to also read The Dawkins Delusion by Alister E. McGrath. It would offer an informed rebuttal of many of Dawkins’ claims by a world-class scholar with doctoral degrees in both molecular biology and

theology.

I deal with alleged contradictions in the infancy narratives in my article on the virgin birth here on the Probe Web site. A more in-depth article can be found here: www.tektonics.org/af/birthnarr.php.

Two other sites you should be familiar with are Bible.org and ReasonableFaith.org. The latter site is that of Christian philosopher/theologian William Lane Craig. I would highly recommend his articles on the existence of God, the historicity of Jesus, etc. Both sites have lots of great resources.

Wishing you all the best in your studies!

Michael Gleghorn

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"Can I Seek God and Not Believe Only in Christ?"

Hello, I have a question about faith. If I am seeking God and doing his will in order to see and know the Truth, what should I do if I'm not led to a exclusive belief in Jesus Christ. I know what it is to seek God in sincerity. If I am seeking God sincerely and still not able to make a resolute decision on Jesus or am even led to decide certainly that there are other paths to salvation, what should I do? Should I listen to God speaking to my heart or should I listen to the apostles of Jesus who wrote the New Testament. I feel the typical Christian answer would either be to say "Listen to the Bible because your heart can deceive you, and the voice of God you

hear could be the deceiver" or to say "If you are really seeking God sincerely, then you will definitely be led to Jesus."

. . . Like I said, I know what it is to sincerely seek God. This is something I know instinctually, the way I know how to walk and breathe. I have sought God sincerely and consistently for short spans of time, usually last no longer than a few hours sometimes days at best. I find that it takes an extremely supply of focus and energy to do so, I often become weary and lose heart.

. . .Is the answer then only to DO? To take action? To seek until I find, Knock until it's opened? Ought I to give up speculating altogether about who will meet me at the door until I have met him face to face? The hardest thing for me about Christianity is that it seems to say that I must decide to accept and follow Christ before God reveals himself to me, and then as a reward for accepting Jesus by the testimony of others God will eventually reveal himself. Shouldn't it be the other way around? Shouldn't I be perfectly content and justified in the eyes of God and all Christians to seek with all sincerity and earnestness, waiting patiently for God to open the door and reveal himself to me? I believe the promise of God that he answers those who knock. I want to knock until God answers…. I feel like in the past I have knocked until I became impatient and went to the neighbors house to ask them about God. Perhaps that's what I'm doing right now for writing all of this. Anyway, thank you for reading my question, I know that I must pray.

Dear _____,

I've been thinking about your question much of yesterday and today.

I'm curious what is the obstacle to putting your trust in Christ alone. There has to be something other than logic and

reason. I sense you have pursued truth and have enough information to know, but you just don't want to. I mean, I guess you already know Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Me," and then He promised to rise from the dead and delivered on the promise.

If He's not the only way, why did He come? Why did He die? What's the point of the resurrection?

And if He's not the only way, how would you know?

But I don't think that's the issue. I think there may be a heart issue that is keeping you from putting all your eggs in the "Jesus basket." Want to tell me what it is?

And if I'm wrong, let me ask you this. Have you ever simply asked, "God, if you're there and You want to have a relationship with me, would You please let me know in some way that I'll know it's You?" And then taking your hands off the timing issue? Is it possible that you have been spoiled by this microwave, instant culture we live in, and you gave up waaaaay too soon?

The God you want (I know you do!! That is AWESOME!!) is the same God who said, "Be still and know that I am God." It doesn't say, for a few hours till you give up and decide I don't want to talk to you. This is the same God who said, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." He wants a relationship with you, _____. But He wants your full attention and He wants you to wait expectantly for him.

Sue Bohlin

Dear Sue,

Thank you so much for your reply.

Those are very good questions that you asked me. You are right about there being something other than logic and reason

keeping me from putting my trust in Christ alone and also about there being issues in my heart preventing me.

A couple of my more surface issues are these; I have so much trouble separating Christ from Christian doctrine. There is so much conflicting Christian doctrine and Rhetoric, and so much man-made bologna being taught in the church that it's hard for me to see Christ himself, apart from all of that. Many times when I read his words, I am blown away by how absolutely contrary his doctrine is to that which I hear in the churches. Sometimes when I read his words I really do fall in love with him and believe in him, but then at other times I become confused.

Another problem I have is an intensely deep fear of being deceived. I look at our world today and see how utterly deceived the whole world is. I even see good upstanding, moral Christians that believe many, many lies that have been told to them by the government and the media. . . . I know that I have done more evil in my life than I could ever understand and I am terrified of the judgment. I know that I am far from where I ought to be in my spiritual progress. I know that I need to be born again!!!

I think that the problem in my heart is fear. I am so afraid of being wrong. I know that if I truly make a leap of faith, there are many people who will be hurt and offended by it. I also know that I will be despised, and I am afraid of that. I know that walking the fence is much worse than making any decision. I know I need to make a decision. I've already decided many times to dedicate my life to Jesus Alone. But every time I've come to places of enormous doubt. Part of my reason I feel it's difficult to accept Christ alone, is I wonder how he could possibly take me seriously… I can't take myself seriously because I made such sincere promises and commitments to Christ in the past, only to doubt and lose faith months later…

I’m glad to be writing about all of this and forcing myself to really think about and intensely question these issues. This has been a great help to me, to closely consider my real reasons for my lack of faith… I’m sure the deeper I investigate, the more I’ll find my reasons aren’t really what I thought they were.

Thank you again for your time.

_____, you are SO CLOSE!!!

Please let me encourage you: forget about the doctrine (though it is important). Forget about the disconnect between church systems and the Savior. Forget about your fears. For right now, focus on Jesus alone. He IS Christianity. He IS life! Please hear me: just focus on Jesus alone for right now and ask Him to show you Himself as truth.

I understand your fear of deception. The enemy wants to deceive you. But deception can only flourish when people discard the truth. I can sense you PASSIONATELY want to know truth, to embrace it, to be transformed by it.

So embrace Jesus, who said He IS the truth.

Allow me to pray for you:

Oh Lord Jesus, I come before Your throne on behalf of this precious man who is so very dear to You. Thank You for dying for his sins and coming back to life so _____ could know real, abundant life in every molecule of his being! He is confused and muddled but You offer him the peace he longs for. Allow him to hear Your voice calling him. Allow Him to sense Your call to trust You completely. Clear away the mists that keep him from falling at Your feet and calling You Lord and God. I know his heart wants to, Lord Jesus. He wants so much to be wooed and captured by Your love that will make him the man he longs to be, a man after Your own heart who will be strong and courageous because he not only knows WHO he is, he

knows WHOSE he is. Give _____ grace to relent from his strong-arming, keeping You at bay, and surrender to the joy and peace and RELIEF that awaits him. I do pray for him, Lord, that You would give him what he needs to turn the corner. Let him hear You whispering how much You love him and want him today.

Blessings to you, dear one.

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"Please Help Me – I'm Lost"

Please help me, I'm lost. I'm in my 50s now and the question of life after death is on my mind a lot. I've been brought up a Methodist but stopped going to church when I was big enough to make my own decisions. . . . Being young, I lived for the moment and never gave God much thought. But now that I'm older I want to know more.

Like what does it matter if one man lives or dies? It's not going to make any difference as the world turns. We're not supposed to care about earthly things but in this country that is supposed to be "one nation under God" we probably control half the money in the world and yet millions are dying from starvation. Why? I'm sorry just have so many questions and don't know who to go to for answers. Please help me find peace for myself!

Dear _____,

I am delighted that you wrote to us! My husband Ray and I are both in our fifties as well so we very much understand why you'd be asking these extremely important decisions now. Way to go!! <smile>

Allow me to point you to an essay on our website by Jimmy Williams called "The Most Important Decision of Your Life" here: www.probe.org/the-most-important-decision-of-your-life/.

Also, please allow me to address your question of "what it matters if one man lives or dies, since it won't make any difference as the world turns." Very few people make a noticeable difference to the world at large, but EVERYONE makes a difference to the people closest to us. The world is different because of each of our lives. The question is, what kind of difference does each of us make? One for good, or for evil?

Also, your observation is very true from a worldly perspective, but from God's perspective it makes a tremendous amount of difference because He made you for Himself, and He made you for a purpose. It matters because God wants you to know how much He loves you and how deeply He wants you to accept His invitation to find your life in Him. Ultimately, a billion years from now, when the world as we know it isn't here anymore, only things from God's perspective will matter.

Jimmy's essay will help you grasp life from God's perspective. Let me know what you think after you read it, OK? But first let me pray for you.

Dear God, I lift up _____ to You and I thank You for the big smile on Your face as You see him turning over these important thoughts and decisions in his mind. Thank You for opening _____'s eyes to his need to see the big picture of life and to ask the eternally significant questions he's asking. Lord, it's only Your grace and goodness that allow him to know he is lost and needing peace. He would be blind to those truths if it weren't for You calling to him and allowing him to hear You calling. So help _____ understand his need for You and the promise that is his life, since You made him for a purpose, You made him so You could love him, and You made him so he could love You back, enjoy You forever, and make a difference

because He's Your beloved creation. I pray You would help him cross over the line to become Your beloved son.

I bless you today, _____!

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

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"I Can't Find a Good Reason to Believe in God and the Bible"

I have been reading some of the questions and answers that have been given about god, angels and the rest. Some of the questions make sense but to me almost none of the answers. Just so you know, I am a non believer in all of that and can find no good reason to believe. I tried going to church, going to meetings, bible study, prayer meetings—for me there are no real answers to anything in this life, just excuses. Maybe I am writing this with hopes of finding some.

When I have read the bible I find the good that everyone talks about and speaks of. It is always the same few things. The reason for me is because there is so little of it. I find plenty of ethnic cleansing, wars of extermination, murder of men women and children ordered by god. If the numbers in the bible are true which I do not believe they are, it is just something to try and frighten people. If the numbers of people ordered murdered by or murdered by god are anywhere near what is real, it makes Hitler, Stalin and Mao look like made-up

cartoon characters. Yet we read about them and are appalled, so why not god?

I really believe to read the bible without horror one must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing and benevolent in the heart of man. That is what is the most frightening thing to me about most people who believe. I know I cannot read the bible with an open mind and not be appalled at the majority of the actions of god. I have tried. For me this is not divine love. People are always upset at the amount of violence that is in society, much of it on television—why not by the amount of it in the bible? The treatment of women is one of the most horrible I have ever read…for the most part. In both the old and new testament. That can easily be pointed out in both the laws of the part of the world at that time and in the laws of god.

I do not at all understand how the two most powerful beings in existence cannot solve their own problems and if they can't do that, how am I to believe either of them can assist me in any way? And because they couldn't get along, the entire human race is damned because of that? Makes no sense to me. That to me is like saying one of my siblings did something wrong so I am going to spank all of you for it. And in the case with god it is not because of the siblings it is because he and satan can't get along.

Because of this and many more things I have read in the bible along with research on the meaning of words and laws of that time…I cannot believe. There are too many other teachings that show a much more kinder way of life for human beings. There are many people I have met in life who know that the violent nature of human beings does not exist in all of us…and that is what we live everyday. I believe that in those in whom it does exist, the bible more so than not gives excuses for it to continue. If the entire book is what it is really about, then entire book should be taught. I would love to attend a class bible class that teaches that. I have not yet found one. I

know I would be a tough student…not because I want to be…but because I want to know. I just can't take another bible study that does not go into everything in the book

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. Although it may be a hard thing to read, I believe that God's command to the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites teaches us a very important lesson about God. God is absolutely holy and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (see Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Proverbs 11:21; Nahum 1:3). The Canaanites were guilty of some of the worst crimes imaginable: terrible idolatry, immoral sexual behavior, and child sacrifice, just to name a few. All the way back in Genesis 15:13-16, God revealed to Abram His plan to give His people the land of Canaan. However, notice that His promise would not be fulfilled for over 400 years. Why? Because, as God said, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). We must not forget, therefore, that God was very patient with the wicked practices of these people. He gave them hundreds of years to repent and turn from their wicked ways. But they chose not to. In the end, God did indeed judge them for their sin—just as He will one day judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Matt. 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15).

Let me also point out that God, as the Sovereign Creator and Judge of all mankind, has the right to give life and to take it away. After giving the Canaanites hundreds of years to repent, God finally judged their sins by waging a holy war against them through His people. This was a Divine judgment upon the Canaanites for their sins. It was also the means by which God would protect His chosen people from being corrupted by the wicked practices of these peoples (see Deuteronomy 12:2-4; 20:16-18). The lesson we are taught, I believe, is that God takes sin very seriously and will, as the perfectly holy and righteous Judge of all mankind, punish all sin without exception. In the end, not one sin will go unpunished. If any sin went unpunished, God would not be perfectly just.

But since He is perfectly just, not one sin will go unpunished. This is a sober warning to all mankind that God is very serious about judging sin. It is quite proper for us to react to these stories with a healthy fear of God's judgment. Although God's judgment on the Canaanites was severe, the number of peoples killed is not anywhere close to the numbers murdered by Hitler and Stalin. But even if they were, it's important to put these events in proper perspective. After all, God's judgment on those who reject His Son and the free offer of His friendship, grace, love and forgiveness, results in much more severe consequences than mere physical death (see Revelation 20:11-15). Those who reject Jesus' sacrifice on the cross in their place as the only acceptable payment for their sins, will have to pay for their sins themselves. And this involves eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).

As for the treatment of women, it's very important to recognize that women in ancient Israel, and especially in the early church, were treated far better than they were in the surrounding cultures of those days. All the way back in Genesis 1:27 we are told that BOTH men and women are created in the image and likeness of God. Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). He urged husbands to love their wives in the same manner that Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). This is a sacrificial sort of love that would even give its life for the beloved, just as Christ did for His church. Christianity actually did more than any other force in the ancient world to bring about an elevation in the status of women.

It's important to realize that man is not punished because God and Satan can't get along. This idea is taught nowhere in the Bible. Men are to be judged and punished for their sins (unless they repent and receive God's mercy through faith in Christ Jesus), just as Satan and his angels are to be judged and punished for theirs. We will not be punished because God

and Satan can’t get along. Furthermore, we shouldn’t think of God and Satan as virtual equals. Satan is a rebel angel, a being originally created good by God, but who rebelled against God and sinned. Satan has no more power relative to God than you or I. Compared to God, Satan is completely powerless. Indeed, the only power he has is due to the fact that God created him with it, maintains him in existence, and (for the moment) allows him to exercise it in a manner contrary to His perfect moral will. At God’s proper time, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity (Revelation 20:10). He will never be permitted to wreak chaos and moral rebellion in God’s world again.

Finally, I will honestly say that I don’t believe there is a higher example of moral purity, holiness and virtue than that of Jesus. If what He taught is true, then the only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in Him (John 14:6). Furthermore, the Bible does not acknowledge that anyone (other than Jesus) is without sin or guilt. The Bible teaches that not one of us is righteous (Romans 3:10), but that all of us are sinners (Romans 3:23). Nevertheless, although the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Although Christians are not perfect, Christ Jesus is. And it is to Him that God invites us to look for His grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and eternal life. “O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8).

Shalom,

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