

“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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“Is Reiki Just Another Means

to Medicine?”

I have a daughter who is 8 and [whose health] is very compromised. We have been to doctors, etc. who have yet to come up with an answer. I have had several people recommend Reiki. I have hesitated because I am very leery of “energy” based healings. I am a believing, Bible reading Christian. There is a woman in our church who suggested Reiki and is trained in it. In “testing” her [words against Scripture] I catch a lot of New Age phrases that I am not comfortable with and [it has] become clear she is not actually reading the Word of God...(vs. just attending services).

Your answer supplying [a Christian Perspective on Reiki](#) was the best in terms of guiding me that this is wrong. I think that the reason Reiki is more questionable is because it is reaching out to the “spiritual realm” that does not glorify God. Yet, I am wondering, given that conventional medicine does not glorify God (more so it glorifies the doctor) is Reiki just another means to medicine? Or is it not considered viable because it is so spiritually based?

I just do not understand energy healing and many people (including Christians) suggest we explore energy healing. Given my faith...I know that God is sovereign and can use ALL things...but He also warns us. Do you mind if I ask you to further elaborate? Given modern medicine is simply a tool of God, it does also violate some scriptural things if you look at Old Testament teachings (i.e. vaccines contain animal DNA and we are not to mix this, etc.)

I just want to put this to rest once and for all and know if I am not neglecting an avenue of potential healing for my child. Thank you.

Thanks for your letter. I’m truly sorry to hear about the health difficulties your daughter is struggling with! However,

I could not, in good conscience, recommend Reiki energy medicine as a possible solution. You mentioned an email response which I wrote on a Christian perspective on Reiki, but I'm wondering if you read the article I wrote on Reiki? If not, you can find it [here](#).

In the article I go into much more depth than I can do over email. I offer an overview of Reiki energy medicine, look into the question of whether or not there is any legitimate scientific support for such energy, ask about Reiki's alleged success stories, and discuss some reasons why I believe that Christians should be concerned about Reiki.

First, and foremost, I think that we should be concerned about the spiritual aspects of Reiki. As my article spells out in much more detail, I think that we should be concerned about where the power of Reiki really comes from (provided that there is any real power there to begin with). This leads to my second main concern: if Reiki really has no power whatever to effect genuine (as opposed to merely psychosomatic) healing of the body, then we could end up endangering people's lives by sending them to a Reiki practitioner, instead of a properly credentialed medical doctor. I also explain my reasoning here in more detail in my article.

Of course, modern Western medicine is not perfect. But its reliance on quality control, reproducible results, the scientific method, extensive training, education, and licensing, etc., clearly distinguish it from much of energy medicine. In addition, since those who practice it are not typically calling upon spirit guides and other questionable entities, it is much less likely to entangle those making use of it with possible demonic involvement.

At any rate, as my article shows, it seems to me that there are sufficient reasons for Christians to be wary of Reiki and to avoid it. Others may disagree, but this is definitely my opinion on the matter.

I hope this is helpful and, again, please check out my [article](#) on the subject (if you have not done so already).

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What Does Circumcision as a ‘Seal’ Mean?”

Hello, I am writing because I recently had a baby boy. My son was born with a heart defect, and required surgery when he was about a week old (that’s a great story you can read about [here](#).) Since he had to have surgery right after birth, we did not have the opportunity to get him circumcised in the hospital due to the risk of infection. Now he is five months old, and I am having a really hard time deciding whether or not to have him circumcised.

I know that circumcision is not required for salvation, but I know that the New Testament mentions it. I have read Romans 4, where circumcision is called a “sign,” and I understand what this means, but the part where it is called a “seal” is confusing to me. My husband is just not convinced that circumcision is necessary, and my reasons for wanting to have it done are mainly cultural. It would be really nice to hear a biblical perspective on the matter. Thanks!

Thanks for your letter. First, let me say “hearty congratulations” on the birth of your son! My wife and I recently had a baby boy as well, so we can certainly share your joy.

Second, you're right about physical circumcision not being necessary for salvation. Indeed, to claim such a thing would be completely contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the New Testament (see, for example, Romans 3:27-30; 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:18-19; Galatians 2:1-5; 5:6, 11; 6:12-16). Salvation is a gift of God's grace, which we receive through faith in Christ alone.

Third, as it's used in Romans 4:11, a "seal" is simply a way of attesting to, or confirming, something. Thus, circumcision (in this passage) is a "seal" (that is, it attests to, or confirms) the righteousness which Abraham had by faith before he was ever circumcised. Thus, circumcision is essentially a "sign" and a "seal" in the same sense here. The terms are basically synonymous.

Biblically speaking, you are under no obligation whatever to have your son circumcised. Medically speaking, however, there do seem to be certain benefits which may be worth considering with your physician. But that's a decision for you and your husband.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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“When Does a Fetus Receive a Soul?”

I had a question about the beginning of life. My wife and I have endured two miscarriages so far. The doctor says that there isn't enough genetic info to create personhood for at

least eight days and both of our miscarriages happened before a visible fetus had formed. (One when there was just a gestational sac, another when there was just an endometrium lining). We've always believed life begins at conception, of course, and I've read a couple articles on this site to that end. But when does a fetus receive a soul? Do we, CAN we know from scripture? It seems obvious that the life cycle is under way when sperm and egg meet, but at what point does the soul become infused in the cells?

Thank you for writing, and I am sorry to hear that you and your wife have had to endure two miscarriages. One of my siblings had to deal with this recently, so I know it is a difficult loss. I pray that God will provide comfort and healing for you and that he would bring compassionate friends into your life who know what you have gone through. I will provide an academic answer to your question, but know that I am sensitive to the circumstance behind your question.

I have received questions about when exactly the soul enters the body before, and I know there are several theories posited by theologians to this end. With that in mind, understand that my training is as a scientist and a bioethicist. I will tell you that the soul is not something that we can detect scientifically because science deals in the realm of the physical, and the soul is in the realm of the spiritual. We can see the physical effects of the spiritual realm, but we cannot actually detect the spiritual. Many have tried to this end with experiments that teeter on verge of ridiculous (the God Helmet comes to mind).

From scripture, especially, looking at Psalm 139 (I recommend reading the whole thing): "O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether."

God has a very intimate knowledge of us, and as we see in the next few verses in this Psalm, that knowledge extends to everywhere, including the womb.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?... For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

This is a reference to being made in the womb. Even there God has this intimate knowledge of man. I think this is an important verse for your situation because it is a reminder that God was sovereign over both of these pregnancies, and for whatever reason, they were not to come to fruition. The next verse is even more to this point.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

I was particularly struck by the "unformed substance" in this verse because you said your babies died when one was a gestational sac and the other when there was just an endometrial lining. And according to this verse, God seems to treat this unformed substance as though it has a soul.

I cannot conclude when a fetus receives a soul, but from scripture, it seems that God's actual mechanism on this is not our concern. The point is that this unformed substance will have/does have/has always had a soul, and we treat it as such. I also think it is reasonable to conclude from general and special revelation (that would be from what we know from observation and from the Bible) that from the time of conception the new clump of cells is a new individual. Your doctor is defining personhood as something that has the full

genetic make-up of a person. Before 8 days, the cells have not formed its entire genetic structure, it's still in the process of doing that, however, those cells are also not composed of only your genetics or only your wife's genetics. In fact, there is no other genetic match to those cells, so it is a new genetic entity, and in that sense is a unique, new being.

I think it is tempting in our culture to think of the soul as a physical object that gets infused or sewn into our bodies. According to scripture, it seems to be much more complex than that; kind of in the sense that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. We are both physical beings and spiritual beings and because of the fall we have a very difficult time understanding or even interacting with the spiritual aspect. Thankfully, Christ provided a way that we could interact with God (who is spirit) again.

I usually try to stick to the question at hand, but I do want to address that if your babies had souls, then where are they now? According to Psalm 139, God is sovereign, which is comforting because you can rest in his sovereign and loving grace knowing that he has taken care of your babies.

Thank you for writing,

Heather Zeiger

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“Is There a Demonic Spirit of Homosexuality?”

Could people who honestly believe they are gay, possibly be blinded by a demonic spirit of homosexuality? Or could they

possibly have a demon of homosexuality in them? I am not saying all are demon possessed, but what is it that makes them truly, honestly believe that they are born this way?

Having studied both spiritual warfare and the contributing factors to homosexuality, I do not think that a demonic spirit of homosexuality is the definitive explanation for believing one is gay. Yes, deception is an important component to a homosexual orientation; those who experience same-sex attraction unwittingly believe a number of lies about life, about themselves, about others, and often about God. And where sin and deception are, there is often a demonic presence or element.

In those who feel "different" from childhood, homosexuality comes from emotional and spiritual brokenness. There is a constellation of contributing factors to this brokenness: hurtful relationships with parents and peers, unmet emotional needs, emotional traumas due to abuse, wrong perceptions, warped gender identity. I believe that the enemy of our souls exploits this brokenness and whispers lies to broken people that are very easy to believe because they don't know they're lies. (Lies such as, "You make a lousy boy [or girl]." "You're not like everybody else." "Nobody will accept you." "If you were a better boy/girl, your father/mother would love you more." "The way to get love is through sex." "God made you gay." "You may not like being like this, but you can't change." "You don't deserve anything better.") So in this way, there is probably a demonic element to the development of homosexuality.

In regard to those who experienced a normal heterosexual childhood: some people are so addicted to indulging their flesh that they turn to homosexual behavior in adulthood. In this case, sin grows up from within the darkened human heart, as described in James 1:14-15: "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is

accomplished, it brings forth death.” There’s probably some demonic influence involved in this process as well.

Is there an actual demonic spirit of homosexuality? Probably so. I have heard a few (a very few, and I’ve been involved in homosexual ministry for 10 years) testimonies of people who experienced something like a net of same-sex lust being dropped on them, or out-of-the-blue, overwhelming homosexual desires coming upon them like a car wreck. I have also heard from people who report having experienced a spirit of sexual “strangeness” ever since early childhood. In those cases, eventually they recognized the demonic aspect and stood against it. Sometimes, people can dabble in homosexual behavior, and this sin opens the door to demonic oppression. Only repentance, renouncing the door-opening in Jesus’ name, and trusting in Christ, makes the demons leave.

But on the other hand, many gay-identifying individuals have pursued deliverance ministry, seeking to have “the demon of homosexuality” cast out of them—and it didn’t make any difference in their feelings or thoughts, because that wasn’t the cause of their same-gender attraction in the first place. They were seeking an easy fix to a complex problem, but if it’s not the cause of the problem, it won’t work. Romans 12:2 directs us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, which means changing our beliefs and thoughts (which can result in a change of feeling), but this is the work of discipline. Again, no easy fix.

You ask why people honestly believe they are born homosexual. Well, for the same reason you could honestly believe you were born an English speaker. You’ve always spoken English, it’s all you’ve ever known, it’s the most natural thing in the world for you. The reality is that you, like all humans, were born a LANGUAGE speaker, but being an English speaker was shaped by thousands of interactions with your family and your culture. Homosexuals are shaped in similar ways that started at birth. All people are born to be relational, but some

people are relationally broken because of thousands of interactions that are a result of living in a fallen world with fallen people. And different people express relational brokenness in different ways. I think of families where one sibling is gay and another deals with chronic rage or depression. Different kinds of brokenness, depending on the personality and perceptions of the individuals.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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“At What Stage of Pregnancy is a Fetus Able to Be Genetically Engineered?”

I am a high school student wondering about the process [of] genetic screening. I would like to know at what stage of pregnancy a fetus is able to be genetically engineered, or if the process must begin before a child is conceived. I would also like to know whether or not a normal gene has to be cloned from a donor in order to replace a problem gene in another. Any help would be greatly appreciated!

Just to make sure we are on the same page, *genetic engineering* and *genetic screening* are two different, but related things. *Genetic screening* involves testing a person for certain genetic diseases. This test can occur before the embryo is implanted into the womb as in the case of *in vitro*

fertilization (IVF), it can occur during the pregnancy through a procedure called amniocentesis, and it can occur after a baby is born including into adulthood. Often with IVF, embryos are screened and the "best" ones are selected for implantation. Embryos need not just be screened for diseases, they can also be screened for gender and certain genetic markers. In some states pregnant women over 40 may be required to get genetic testing to determine if their baby has Down's syndrome since the chances of Down's syndrome increases when the mother is over 40. Most babies after they are born are tested for certain diseases such as phenylketouria because, if they test positive, the parents need to keep them on a strict diet. Lastly, some couples might want to be genetically screened before they decide to get married. This was practiced in a particular group of American-Jewish people who had a high incidence of Tay-Sachs disease. If both people were carriers, then they may decide not to get married because they would likely have a child that would die from Tay Sachs (they usually die at about age 5).

Genetic modification and *genetic engineering* are slightly different. *Modification* is done with plants and with some farm animals (although usually they use hormonal and breeding techniques for reasons outlined below). *Genetic engineering* in humans is still more theoretical than actual. The reason for this has to do with our lack of knowledge regarding the genome.

The theory goes like this: in the lab, we can replace segments of DNA with other segments of DNA in organisms like bacteria. So, what if we do this with human beings: replace unwanted DNA that codes for unwanted traits with DNA that codes for wanted traits. Sounds simple enough. Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on your point of view—our genome is *not* that simple. There isn't just one strand of DNA that codes for eye color and another that codes for hair color. Our genes (genes are composed of lots of DNA) are very complex and the functions

they code for are interwoven, often coding for multiple things at a time. Also, scientists are finding that DNA doesn't simply code for traits in a letter-to-letter fashion. Rather, there is apparently some interaction between two genes spatially in the genome.

As far as whether a normal gene has to be cloned from another, theoretically one can make segments of DNA in the lab. And scientists have been able to insert these segments into bacterial cells. However, replacement and insertion of a DNA segment in mammalian cells is a very different story, and has not been successful in laboratory settings to the extent of being able to conduct genetic engineering. I suppose if you wanted to genetically engineer traits into a human being, it would have to be at an early embryonic stage when there are only 6-8 cells to deal with. But even then, it is unclear whether we could use synthesized DNA or if we must receive large segments from a donor. This is very problematic because there is still the issue of expressing (i.e., flipping the "on switch") of the DNA in the organism.

Thanks for writing. Hope this is helpful.

Heather Zeiger

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“Is It a Sin To Mistreat Animals?”

I know that the Bible does not say whether or not animals go to Heaven. My question is, is it at least a sin in God's eyes for people to mistreat animals? Does God care that animals

suffer?

[*Editor's Note: Two Probe researchers have responded to this question.*]

From Sue Bohlin:

God shows Himself to be a God of compassion toward animals in Jonah 4:11:

*"Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, **as well as many animals?**"*

He also wants us to be, like Himself since He made us in His image, people of compassion toward animals:

*"A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal."
(Proverbs 12:10a)*

It's helpful to look at some big ideas in scripture:

In Genesis 1:28, God tells Adam and Eve,

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This is the principle of stewardship.

Secondly, the Bible says that all animals belong to God:

*O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.
There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great. (Psalm 104:24-25)*

Since all animals belong to God, and God has put their care and management into the hands of people, we can deduce that it is wrong to mistreat something that belongs to God.

So, while the Bible doesn't come out and say it is a sin to mistreat animals, a case can be made that it's wrong.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

About the Author



[Sue Bohlin](#) is an associate speaker with Probe Ministries. She attended the University of Illinois, and has been a Bible teacher and conference speaker for over 30 years. She is a frequent speaker for MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) and Stonecroft Ministries (Christian Women's Connections), and serves on the board and as a small group leader of Living Hope Ministries, a Christ centered outreach to those dealing with unwanted homosexuality. Sue is on the Bible.org Women's Leadership Team and is a regular contributor to [TheTapestryBlog.com](#). She is also a professional calligrapher and the webmistress for Probe Ministries; but most importantly, she is the wife of Dr. Ray Bohlin and the mother of their two grown sons. Her personal website is [suebohlin.com](#).

From Heather Zeiger:

Thanks for writing. It just so happens that I looked up some verses on this in studying for a discussion on

environmentalism and stewardship. I will also tell you that I love animals, and have always had at least one animal, and usually more at one time. I currently have a sweet little cat and a red-eared slider turtle, so the question of animal cruelty is a good question and certainly one I care about.

true that animals are not made in God's image, and therefore, are not capable of sin nor are saved as humans are, so unfortunately I will not likely see my pets in Heaven, although there is some reason to believe that there will be animals (and plants) in Heaven.

Having said that, animals are part of God's creation, and not only that but are apparently a good part of his creation and something that he cares very much about. Here are some important verses (emphasis mine):

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth" (Genesis 1:20-22).

"And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:24, 25).

So it seems that not only did God want animals to be part of creation, but he thought it was good to put them here, and he even blessed them. He also seems to have taken care to make

them in an orderly way and specific to their environment (the sea, the land). So while God made man above the animals, and even allowed him to use them for food or clothing, he also made man to be a steward over creation. This means he wanted Adam to care for creation. We see elements of this in God's law when he specifies how the Israelites are to care for both the domestic and wild animals when they enter the Promised Land (Leviticus 25:1-12), and how they are to care for livestock (Deuteronomy 22:1-4, 6, 9, and 25:4). Proverbs 12:10 says that "Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel."

In the New Testament we see that God cares for the birds: "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Matthew 6:26.

In short, the answer to your question is yes, cruelty to animals is a sin and yes, God most certainly cares about animal suffering. Man is to be a steward over God's creation. Man is more important to God than the animals, but God obviously expects man to care for creation.

Even when we consider that animals were used for sacrifices, it is not meant to be an enjoyable thing, but...well...a sacrifice. This particular suffering of animals is ordained by God to foreshadow the suffering of Christ. The sacrifice pleases God because it pleases him that man has obeyed God and repented for his sins. For example, 1 Samuel 15:22 says, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams." There are also places in Deuteronomy and Isaiah that talk about how God desires man's heart more so than the act of sacrifice. The sacrifice is to turn man's heart to God.

I hope this was helpful for you. Always feel free to email us with questions.

“We Need Encouragement After Repeated Miscarriages”

Recently, my wife and I suffered our third miscarriage in a little over a year. I am feeling so many emotions right now from anger and frustration to confusion. We have no kids currently, but would like to one day. I am having trouble reconciling these miscarriages and was hoping for some encouragement I guess. Where can I look in the Bible for something that helps?

My hurt aches for you and your wife. I am so very, very sorry for the tsunami of pain and disappointment and grief you and she are experiencing. My husband and I are also in the “Parents Who Have Lost Babies” club. Burying our daughter after nine days of life was devastating to us, but God has greatly redeemed every bit of the pain in the years since then.

I think the encouragement you seek will come from being able to see the bigger picture, one that includes God’s tender love for you and His tears for your pain as He works out His purposes in your life and character. May I suggest a couple of resources that may help? My Probe article “The Value of Suffering” is intensely practical in terms of understanding a biblical view of pain and suffering: [The Value of Suffering](#)

At our last Probe Mind Games conference, where we equip students to be confident in their faith before they get to college, I recorded my teaching session on this subject, which I sensed was very much anointed by God. I pray you find it

helpful and comforting: www.box.net/shared/66gn28bubc (It opens with the sound track to the video I show first, Rob Bell's NOOMA video "Rain.")

You may also find [Caleb Ministries](#) helpful; they help people who are in exactly your position.

I send this with the prayer that you and your wife experience the warmth of God's comfort wrapped around your soul like a warm blanket on a cold and rainy day.

Again, I am so sorry for your losses.

Sue Bohlin

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"You've Got Islam Wrong"

Dear Rick Rood,

I stumbled upon your ["What is Islam"](#) web page and read it thoroughly. I would like to know how you got that information because it is inaccurate. I would just like to point them out to you so that you may correct them.

"He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities."

Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of dieties. Allah means "God" in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.

“At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. “

Correction: Islam is a pure monothestic religion. The message of Islam is that “There is no God, but God.” How is it not? Please elaborate.

“The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.”

Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah’s names hold magical powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These names identify the characteristics of God.

“Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshipping him.”

Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.

“Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so.”

Why is that?

“But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin.”

What kinds? For example?

“A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means ‘exertion’ or ‘struggle’ in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or ‘holy war.’ The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!”

You got the part right about how the Jihad means “struggle,” but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, & to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.

There are MANY other mistakes that you have written about Islam. Not to mention that it sounds very bigoted. Please fix your mistakes. Thanks!

Thanks for your letter. Rick Rood is no longer with Probe Ministries. However, I’m afraid that you may have misunderstood certain aspects of Rick’s article. Please allow me to try to briefly clarify.

“He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities.”

Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of dieties. Allah means “God” in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.

1. Any good history of the Arab peoples that documents the religious climate immediately preceding the time of Muhammad will confirm that there was indeed a pantheon of deities. Muhammad instituted monotheism in place of a prior Arabic

polytheism.

“At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. “

Correction: Islam is a pure montheistic religion. The message of Islam is that “There is no God, but God.” How is it not? Please elaborate.

2. Mr. Rood uses the term “monolithic” – not “monotheistic.” I believe that you simply misread him at this point. Islam is certainly monotheistic. He documents what he means by it not being monolithic in his article. [Note: Dictionary.com provides this meaning for *monolithic*: “characterized by massiveness, total uniformity, rigidity, invulnerability, etc.”]

“The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.”

Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah’s names hold magical powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These names identify the characteristics of God.

3. Your third point is well-taken, provided we are speaking of theologically educated Muslims. However, many Muslims hold to what some scholars call “folk Islam.” This sort of Islam, often influenced by [animism](#), does often regard these names as having magical power. Similar aberrant beliefs can be found in Judaism, Christianity, and most other world religions. And sometimes Sufi mysticism can tend in this direction as well.

“Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who

appear to come close to worshiping him."

Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.

4. Again, your point is well-taken, provided we are speaking of theologically educated Muslims. However, as I mentioned above, some Muslims would come awfully close to worshiping Muhammad, just as some Roman Catholics come awfully close to worshiping the virgin Mary. I'm not saying this is what orthodox Islam teaches, it's simply what sometimes happens in practice.

"Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so."

Why is that?

5. Do you not believe that all things are dictated by the sovereign will of Allah? Does anything happen that is not willed by God? If you reject this doctrine, I think you would be taking a minority view within Islam.

"But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin."

What kinds? For example?

6. Casting stones at a stone pillar representing Satan. This was done by Arab pagans prior to the time of Muhammad.

"A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means 'exertion' or 'struggle' in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of

Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or 'holy war.' The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!"

You got the part right about how the Jihad means "struggle," but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, & to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.

7. As for Jihad, it has historically been understood by most Muslims (and still is today) as Holy War. It can be interpreted, as you say, to mean striving in the cause of Allah to live a pure and righteous life. But many passages in the Quran resist this interpretation (e.g. Suras 4:74-75; 9:5, 14, 29; 47:4; 61:4; etc.).

The New Encyclopedia of Islam (Altamira Press, rev. ed. 2001) documents many of these points.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What’s the Difference Between a Prophet and a Clairvoyant?”

How can I show my friend biblically that clairvoyance, tarot

cards, and such are wrong? She seems to think that there is no difference in a prophet and clairvoyant (psychic reading), seeing as they both can predict the future. Can you help me explain the differences?

You might try to get your friend to understand the importance of making distinctions between prophecy and clairvoyance by pointing out the difference between poisonous mushrooms and safe mushrooms: they can both be eaten, but one kind will kill you! Those who claim to be clairvoyant are either fraudulent, making things up as they read the body-language responses of their customers, or they are being fed information from demons. [For an example of a fraudulent psychic, see our answer to email "[What About Crossing Over's John Edward?](#)"] And Jesus told us that demons lie ("[W]hen he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8:44).

The biblical standard of a prophet of God is 100% accuracy. This is because the information about future events is coming from God Himself, and He is powerful enough to overcome the limitation of speaking through a fallen, fallible human being. That is a long way from the fuzzy "information" from self-proclaimed psychics and clairvoyants! If anyone is receiving their "power" or information from anyone except God, which would be demonstrated by 100% accuracy in their predictions (and, I would suggest, the mark of Christlikeness in their character and life), it is coming from the dark side—the Evil One. There is no such thing as morally neutral supernatural information or power.

It is a dangerous thing to play around with the occult, as many can testify that this is how they opened the doors to demon oppression in their lives.

We have several articles you may find helpful in showing your friend God's warnings to stay away from the occult:

[“What’s a Biblical Description of Witchcraft?”](#)

[The World of the Occult](#)

[The Occult Connection](#)

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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See Also:

- [“Is Clairvoyance Wrong?”](#)