“Where DID Cain Get His Wife?”

“Where DID Cain Get His Wife?”

That’s a long standing question that unfortunately, most commentaries don’t offer much help answering. I assume a literal Adam and Eve as the first humans. Therefore for several generations the family tree has only one trunk. Seth and Cain could only have married daughters of Adam and Eve, their sisters.

That always causes some severe consternation. Francis Collins, an evangelical Christian and the new head of NIH, has written that that solution goes against numerous Old Testament laws. How could the God of the Bible allow for such things? Collins opts for an evolved human race and a figurative Adam and Eve. He also seems to think, though he doesn’t explain, that Cain marrying his sister goes against the plain reading of the text.

The main societal taboo against incest is a practical one since offspring from these unions, even among distant cousins, carry an increased risk of birth defects. This is a well-known result of what geneticists call inbreeding. BUT Adam and Eve were completely without genetic mutation, the source of inbreeding birth defects. Therefore there was no biological risk from sister/brother marriages.

In the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it was still the practice of marrying within one’s family, at least twenty generations after Adam and Eve if you assume no extra generations in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

In Genesis 20:12 Abraham tells Abimelech that he was not completely lying when he told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister; “Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my

father though not of my mother.” Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister.

When Isaac needed a wife, Abraham tells his servant to go to his country and even his own family to find a suitable wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:4). Genesis 24:15 tells us that Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel, who is the son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

Isaac then tells Jacob to seek a wife from the daughters of Laban, Rebekah’s brother. (Genesis 28:2). So Jacob married two of his first cousins, Leah and Rachel.

Before the Law of Moses, these kinds of unions were the norm. But over 400 years later, mutations have accumulated in all populations and such marriages are quite risky. Therefore, I think, that is why you read in Leviticus 20:17 that if you marry your sister who is either the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother (thus including half-siblings) they shall be cut off. So a marriage like Abraham and Sarah’s was specifically outlawed in the Law of Moses. I think times have changed and the offspring of these once-normal arrangements are at significant risk.

Also, there still may have been a reticence to marry a brother or sister with whom one grows up. But when you realize that Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old, certainly there were many more children between Cain and Abel, and Seth. Therefore Cain very conceivably could have married a sister who was twenty or thirty years younger than he was, and therefore they did not grow up together, so there wasn’t the same degree of familiarity as with a same-age sibling.

Bottom-line, I find no difficulty either theologically or biologically with Cain and Seth marrying their sisters. Marrying within the family remained the normal practice for over twenty generations.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Help! I Opened Myself Up to the Devil!”

I am in need of help! When I was about fifteen years old, I was friends with a man who at that time I did not know was a Satan worshipper. He cut the palm of his hand, I cannot remember if he cut mine or not but, he then rubbed our palms together and he licked the blood from his hand. I really didn’t think much of it at that time. Now, I am thirty-seven years old. For the past three years I have been having a lot of trouble with people following me, putting devil symbols in my house and just a lot of different things pertaining to the devil.

I recently remembered this blood act with this man and now recall who he is. I recently found out that his daughter works with me and I really believe she knows what’s going on. Although she acts totally innocent. I need to know if there is anything I can do to stop all this evilness around me. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Wow. You really do have a stronghold in your life for the evil one to exploit, don’t you?

There is a powerful and wonderful resource that has freed thousands of people from exactly this kind of stronghold. Neil Anderson’s book *The Bondage Breaker* is excellent, and you should read the whole book, but especially Chapter 12, called “Steps to Freedom in Christ.” It is a series of prayers that walk you through all the places where you allowed Satan to

gain a foothold in your life, and it helps you renounce them and stop the demonic harrassment.

I hope this helps. I know it has helped SO many people in your shoes.

Let me pray for you before I send this.

Father God, I lift up _____ to you and ask that You bring complete freedom to her through the ministry of people in the body of Christ like Neil Anderson. I pray that You would show her exactly what she needs to do to revisit the time when Satan gained an entrance into her heart and mind and life, and that You would protect her from the evil one. Lord God, I pray the holy and precious Blood of Jesus over her and ask that You do whatever it takes to allow that powerful Blood to cleanse _____ and make her holy and pure and freed from the traps of the enemy. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Let me know what happens, OK?

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Can a Just God Order the Slaughter of Men, Women and Children?"

I am a Christian and spend time talking with others often about God, but I have been speechless when they bring up the issue, for example, in I Samuel 15:1-3 where God tells His people to destroy the men and the women and children as well. This is difficult to see that as part of His character. Is

that a just God? What was He thinking?? I understand that the Amalekites ambushed them when travelling from Egypt but why the women and children?? I would really appreciate your reply. Thank you.

This is indeed a question often asked by critics of the Bible. It is a legitimate question and one that deserves a comprehensive, complete and, hopefully, acceptable answer. So let me see if I can address it.

One of the most important rules of Hermeneutics (the task of interpretation, meaning of a verse or passage of Scripture) is to observe the *context* of what you are seeking to interpret correctly. This is crucial in seeking to answer this question you have raised. We need to see clearly the historical background and the situation which called for such severe measures to be taken.

Who were the Canaanites?

Canaan, the Bible tells us, was the fourth son of Ham, who was one of the three sons of Noah. The use of the word "Canaan" stems from the fact that Canaan's descendants populated the land which was later called Palestine, and now is called Israel. Modern Syria is also included and it is roughly the same land which God promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21; Numbers 34:1-12).

The Amalekites which you mentioned were one of several tribes which are often referred to collectively as either Canaanites or Phoenicians. Their language was either Ugaritic or Phoenician, two Semitic dialects close to the Hebrew dialect. Other major "Canaanite" tribes included the Amorites, Jebusites, Hivites, Girgasites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Moabites. The Phoenicians were a sea-faring people who lived along the Mediterranean Coast. They also had colonies which included Cypress, Sardinia, and Carthage.

What were their Religious beliefs and practices?

Archaeology has given us substantial material about these people, and particularly from their capital city, Ugarit. Thousands of clay tablets have been recovered from Ras Shamra in northern Syria, including the libraries of two great temples dating from the 15th-14th century B.C. Much of this epic literature has to do with their religious practices and their pantheon of gods. Merrilll F. Unger notes that Canaanite cultic practices were more base than any other place in the ancient Near East. (*Unger's Bible Dictionary,* p.172). Let me list some of the features of their religious beliefs and practices.

The Canaanite Pantheon (of gods)

A full description of the Canaanite gods has been provided by C. R. Driver, who translated the Ras Shamra tablets found in the ancient city of Ugarit.

El
The head of the Canaanite pantheon. El was generally a rather remote and shadowy figure, but sometimes stepped down from his eminence and became the hero of exceedingly "earthy" myths. He is described as living at a great distance ("a thousand plains, ten thousand fields,") from Canaan, and to this remote spot the gods invariably had to travel when they wished to consult him.

El was called the "father of years," the "father of man," and also the "father bull," i.e. the progenitor of all the gods. He is likened to a bull in the midst of a herd of cows and calves. According to the text, El had three wives: Astarte (goddess of the evening star), Asherah (goddess of the sea and consort to Baal), and Baaltis—all three his sisters. He is a brutal, bloody tyrant, whose acts caused all the gods to be terrified by his decisions. For example, he dethroned his own father ("Heaven, Uranus") and castrated him; he killed his own favorite son, "Iadid," and cut off his daughter's head. The tablets also portray El as seducing two women, whose names are

not mentioned, and he allows them to be driven into the desert after the birth of two children, “Dawn” (shahru) and “Sunset” (shalmu). W. F. Albright in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages, XXXV,* comments that the description of the act of seduction of these two women is one of the frankest and most sensuous in ancient Near-Eastern literature.

Baal and Mot

Baal is the great storm-god. He brings the rain, and announces his present with thunder and lightning and, most important of all, the needed rain which would insure a good harvest. He became the reigning king of the gods, and was enthroned on a lofty mountain in the far northern heavens, but faithfully reappears each year to sustain the people. Mot, whose name means “death,” represents the god of “drought” and “sterility.” In the myth, he is Baal’s chief and continual antagonist. Even Baal must yield to Mot when his time (of the year) comes. When Mot comes, Baal’s time is over and he is ordered to take everything connected with him down into the depths of the earth:

> “And you, take your clouds,
> Your wind, your storm, your rains!
> With you take Padriya daughter of the stream.
> With you take Tatalliya daughter of rain.”(67:v:6-11)

The situation could hardly be more clearly described: the season of drought has come, the rain and the clouds have vanished; the streams have dried up and the vegetation languishes. But before Baal descends into the earth, however, he

> *“Makes love to a heifer in Debir,*
> *A young cow in the fields of Shimmt.*
> *He lies with her seventy-seven times—*
> *Yea, he copulates eighty-eight times—*
> *So she conceives and bears a child.”(76:v;18-22)*

Anath
The goddess of fertility. She was considered a divine prostitute. She is represented as a naked woman in the prime of life, standing on a lion, with a lily in one hand and a serpent or two in the other. Often two rams are present to portray her sexual vigor. The female organs are always accentuated.

It is important to bear in mind that these "myths" were ritualistically enacted. Therefore we can assume that ritual bestiality was practiced by the priesthood, and temple prostitution was practiced by the adherents (priestesses) of the Anath fertility cult. Cyrus Gordan has written "that it was no crime for men to copulate with animals in Ugarit is indicated by the fact that…Baal impregnated a heifer…a myth…enacted ritually by reputable priests… Moreover, the Bible tells us that the Hebrews' pagan neighbors practiced bestiality (Lev. 18:24) as we now know to be literally true from the Ugaritic documents" (Ugaritic Literature, p. 8).

With Baal's seasonal death, his father, El, the chief god, goes into mourning. El descends from his throne and sits in sackcloth and ashes on the ground. He lacerates himself, making cuts on his face, arms chest and back (cf. I Kings 18:28):

> "Dead is Baal, the Overcomer
> Absent is the Prince, Lord (Baal) of the Earth (67:VI:9,10)
> He pours the ashes of grief on his head.
> The dust of mourning on his pate;
> For clothing, he is covered with sackcloth,
> He roams the mountain in mourning:
> He mutilates his face and beard.
> He lacerates his forearms.
> He plows his chest like a garden.
> He lacerates his back like a valley
> He lifts his voice and shouts: 'Baal is dead!'
> Woe to the people, Woe to the multitudes of Baal

> I shall go down into the earth." (67:VI:15-24)

Anath, Baal's consort, repeats this cry and copies El's self-mutilation.

How does God, the Bible, portray the Canaanites? The clearest and most comprehensive biblical assessment of the Canaanites is found in Leviticus 18:1-5:

> "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do *what is done in the land of Canaan* where I am bringing you; *you shall not walk in their statutes* (ways). You are to perform My judgments and keep my statutes, to live in accord with them. I am the Lord your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord."

By inference, everything forbidden in this chapter is simply a description of what the Canaanites were doing. First on the list of forbidden practices is incest, sexual intercourse with blood relatives and in-laws: your father and mother (v.7,8), your sister (v. 9), your daughter (v. 10), your niece (v. 11), your aunt (v.12, 13), your uncle (v.15), your sister-in-law (v.16), any woman or her children (17), polygamy (two sisters-v.18), adultery (your neighbor's wife-v. 20), ritual child sacrifice (v.21), homosexuality, sodomy (v.22), bestiality (animals-v. 23). God summarizes these prohibitions with:

"Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have visited its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and my judgments, and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you; for the men of the land who have been before you

have done ALL these abominations, and the land has become defiled; so that the land may not spew you out should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 18:24-30).

God's Purpose and Intent

What we observe above is in stark contrast to the cultic practices of the Canaanites, the high standards and expectations of conduct laid out by the God of Israel for His people. Why is it so important that the Israelites shun these practices of the indigent population, the Canaanites?

Because God is doing something new, something important. He has redeemed his chosen people from Egyptian bondage and is in the process of fulfilling his ancient promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12. The larger plan involves an earlier promise (Genesis 3:15) that there would come a "Seed of the Woman" who would crush Satan and establish a means to undo the damage done in Eden through their disobedience. This plan of redemption is promised, and the remainder of the Old Testament is a working out in history the unfolding of that plan to provide a Savior, a Redeemer, a Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise.

And in Abraham God found a worthy servant who would become the patriarch, the father of a nation through whom Messiah would come, bringing untold blessing and deliverance through his life, death, and resurrection to all those who believe. Redemptive history is a long process. It began in Eden immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, and it will one day end in the New Jerusalem.

God’s peculiar people begin with Abraham and his immediate descendants: first Isaac, then Jacob, and then Joseph. These four were the founders, the patriarchs of this new people God was shaping to be the vehicle through which Messiah would come. The Israelites then spent four hundred years in bondage in Egypt until Moses was raised up to deliver them with “a strong hand.” Pharaoh finally let them go. They traveled to Mt. Sinai and stayed there a full year. They arrived at Sinai a disorganized mob; they left there a year later an organized host. During that year God revealed to them the constitutional foundations of their heritage and their mission. He spelled out the rules of their conduct, their worship, and how they would live in community. At the end of this year, they were poised east of the Jordan and ready to go into Canaan and take it by force. But after spying out the land, the fear of the majority with respect to this campaign caused them to shrink back from their task, and God sent them into the wilderness to wander for forty years. The new generation that emerged at the close of this period of divine discipline was finally allowed to go into the Canaan and possess it.

As they prepared themselves for this task, Moses summarized for a second time (the book of Deuteronomy) just what it would take, and what they would have to do. Ironically, the issue of the Canaanites is first spoken of way back in Genesis 15! God is speaking to Abraham and He mentions the problem of the Canaanites. He first speaks of (predicts) the Egyptian bondage which would come, and then He speaks of the deliverance from Egypt, and then He promises the conquest and repossession of the Promised Land. He says:

> Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions… And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old

> age. Then, in the fourth generation they shall return here (Canaan) *for the iniquity of the Amorite (Canaanites) is not yet* ***complete*** (Gen. 15:12-16).

What is interesting about this is that the wickedness of the Canaanites is already recognized as a problem 400+ years before God will give the command that the Canaanites are to be slaughtered—men, women, and children! At the time the Lord spoke these words to Abraham (c. 2,000 B.C.), the Canaanites were already corrupt, but they still had a way to go before God, who is a patient, merciful but Holy God, would finally bring judgment upon them. God gave them 400 years to "shape up," but we find them even more wicked than ever when the Israelites are about to invade (retake) their land!

What is also interesting is that when Jericho was about to be taken, Rahab the prostitute hid the two Israeli spies in her home, lied to the authorities about it, and then helped the spies escape over the wall. While the spies were in her home she said some remarkable things:

> "She came up to them on the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the Amorites whom you utterly destroyed beyond the Jordan… And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord, your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with me…and deliver our lives from death." (Joshua 2:8-13)

Not only Rahab knew of God's powerful deliverance; she tells us that everyone else knew about these events and were fearful for their lives! The difference between Rahab and the rest of

the people of Jericho is that she saw in these mysterious workings none other than the hand of the true God Himself! She repented; she believed! Because of her faith, she is mentioned in Faith's Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11:31)! My point is that other Canaanites could have responded as she did. Unfortunately, they continued on in their wicked, rebellious ways. The fullness of the "Amorites" is now complete. National judgment is at hand, with Israel as the instrument God will use to put an end to a totally depraved culture.

Why Such Excessive Slaughter? Why the Women? Why the Children?

God explains this to us in Romans 1:17-2:2:

> "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.
>
> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
>
> Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an *image* in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to *impurity*, that their bodies might be *dishonored* among them. For they exchanged the *truth of God* for a lie, and worshipped and served the *creature* rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
>
> For this reason God *gave them over* to *degrading* passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is *unnatural*, and in the same way also the men

abandoned the natural function of the woman and *burned in their desire* towards one another, *men with men* committing *indecent acts* and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God *gave them over* to a *depraved mind*, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, *haters of God*, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, with out understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and though they know the ordinance of God, that *those who practice such things are* ***worthy of death***, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you…and we know that the judgment of God *rightfully falls upon those who practice such things.*"

The Romans passage above describes for us in vivid detail how this can happen to a culture. And this is exactly the kind of conditions existing in Canaan as the Israelites approached to conquer the land which had been promised them. God makes it very clear to them the reasons for what they must do and how they must do it:

"Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you… Know therefore today that *it is the Lord your God who is crossing over* before you as a *consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you,* so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the Lord has spoken to you.

Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven

> them out before you, 'Because of *my* righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is because of the wickedness of these nations* that the Lord is dispossessing them before you… It is not for *your* righteousness or for the uprightness of *your* heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the *wickedness of these nations* that the Lord your God is driving them out before you, in order *to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*
>
> Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn (stiff necked) people!" (Deuteronomy 9:1-6)

God makes it very clear that sometimes things deteriorate so far that a culture or a people reaches a "point of no return." The remedy is like trying to unscramble an egg. There is just no way back; things have gone too far. The story of the Genesis Flood is "Exhibit One"—a demonstration that He has already done this once on this planet. A good surgeon does not amputate a leg if someone has a severely stubbed toe. But a good surgeon will amputate if the infection is so massive that to refuse to do so would mean the loss of the whole body and person.

R.A. Torrey remarks: "It is appalling that any people should be utterly put to the sword, but it is even more appalling that a society of people should have become so corrupt and debased that such treatment is deemed necessary in the interest of humanity. The Canaanites were a moral cancer threatening the very life of the whole human race. The cancer had to be removed in order to save the body, just as a surgeon inflicts pain and suffering in order to remove a malignant growth in the body (*Difficulties in the Bible.* R.A. Torrey, p. 47).

This is exactly the dilemma God faced as the Israelites are brought back to possess their land. To settle them in the midst of these depraved people is asking for disaster. If the cancer remains, Israel will not survive. For Israel's survival, the Canaanites will have to go. Israel will be corrupted by their presence and their influence. She will fall away from the Lord Who has loved her and delivered her. Ironically, this is exactly what happened, because while they disposed of most of the inhabitants of Canaan, *they did not remove all of them.* And Israel's incomplete obedience in this matter actually brought about future, periodic relapses when they *did* cease "following the Lord" and served other gods through the ongoing influence of these pagan tribes.

With respect to the women, the experience of Lot, his wife, and his two daughters dwelling in Sodom is instructive. We are told that if ten righteousness men could have been found in the city, God would spare it from judgment. Judgment fell on the city, indicating ten were not found. Lot was "courting disaster" to be a believer and live in such an environment. As the account indicates, Lot survived the judgment because God graciously warned him to flee the city (this was really based upon God's honoring Abraham's intercession on Lot's behalf), but his wife turned around and looked back toward Sodom. This was her home. She liked Sodom. The immorality didn't bother her. She was still yearning for Sodom when God turned her into a pillar of salt. In some instances, the women are the "prime-movers" in leading the men into sin. Torrey comments: "Though true women are nobler than true men, depraved women are more dangerous than depraved men" (p. 48).

The two daughters were also affected. They had sense enough not to turn around and look at the city, but we find in their immoral, incestuous behavior with their own father later that they were already "damaged goods." This is a good warning for Christian parents. We may choose to live in or near "Sodom" and we ourselves may survive, but it is more than likely our

children will not come away unaffected by their exposure to such an unwholesome environment.

With respect to the command to dispose of the children, there is at least one bright spot, severe as it is. Those who adopt children want to do so at the earliest possible age. Why? Because evidence shows that children are early affected by whatever their family system might be. The emotional and physical abuse and wounds inflicted upon them from birth to age five or six leave permanent scars which often cannot be healed. The scars remain, and even the best of environments cannot overcome the negative influences of those early years of development. Even these Canaanite children would have perpetuated the corrupt influence of the Canaanites among the Hebrew Community, had they been spared.

We have all observed or known of families which are so dysfunctional and corrupt we grieve for their unhappy, confused, and suffering children, and wish to God somehow they could be removed and placed in some loving, caring home where they could feel safe and not suffer at the hands of hostile and even deranged parents. Happily, there are no children in hell. Jesus loves the little children. The one bright spot in this sordid story is that God removed an entire generation of Canaanite children and took them to such a home . . . His home.

Those who struggle the most with the forceful elimination of the Canaanites in this biblical account have a very dim and truncated view of God. We have seen above that God has the right, because of His holiness and His righteousness, to visit judgment upon individuals and nations who have become corrupt and degenerate. The amazing thing is, like with the Canaanites, that He waits so long. Torrey remarks,

> "…Those who regard sin lightly and who have no adequate conception of God's holiness will always find insurmountable difficulty in this command of God, but those who have come

> to see the awfulness of sin and have learned to hate it with the infinite hate it deserves, and who have caught some glimpses of the infinite holiness of God and have been made in some measure partakers of that holiness, will, after mature reflection, have no difficulty whatever with this command. It is consciousness of sin in our own hearts and lives that makes us rebel against God's stern dealings with sin (p. 50)."

I hope this in some way helps to address your question, _____.

God Bless.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

"What Comes After Post-Modern?"

If this is the post-modern age, what will the next age be?

Wow! What a difficult question. I'm not sure that we can accurately answer such a question. I liken the discussion to trying to define a word that hasn't been put in the dictionary yet. The jury is still out on what the word will mean. For now, it's slang. It'll mean one thing in one setting and may mean another completely different idea in other settings. Postmodernism has been the greased pig of the state fair competitions. No one has captured it yet to fry it up in a pan. How can we define view of a time period that is still being hashed out? It would be like choosing *Time* magazine's Man of the Year of 2001 in July. September 11th hadn't even

happened yet. When our children hear 2001 they'll most likely think of the terrorism and how George W. Bush responded as our leader. So how can we predict a reaction of a way of thinking that hasn't even tucked itself to bed yet?

Another example would be me trying to determine what my grandchildren will look like before even having my own children. I have no idea even what my children will look like. I have no idea who they might marry. I have no idea what kinds of events may occur to change their appearance: such as fads, accidents, exercise habits, etc. The best I can do is suppose that there will be some kind of resemblance to me.

But let's give it a try. Who knows? Maybe I can coin a movement or something in my presumptuousness. Many scholars expect some kind of return to pre-modern thinking. Of course, we can't call the next movement pre-modernism. We already have one of those. Perhaps "neo-modernism" will rise from the ashes of postmodernity. As postmodernism has critiqued the certainty and absolutes of modernity, perhaps "neo-modernity" will seek to find balance between certainty and skepticism. Honestly, I can glean truth from both dispositions. I can also see detrimental holes in both movements. Perhaps neo-modernism will rescue us from the idea that man is the measure of all things while preserving the fact that truth exists. Perhaps it can also harmonize our desire to see the viewpoints of others without giving in to the danger of political correctness. But let's not be too presumptuous. Modernity is not even dead yet. There are still plenty of folks, in the church and outside of it, that are modernists. Could we or our children live in a day when modernists, postmodernists, and "neo-modernists" all live concurrently? How would that work?

This is more or less a guessing game of entertainment caliber. I have to be honest. Even as I write this I'm shocked by the biblical support for what I just termed as neo-modernity. Isn't what I said just another way of saying Christian? Perhaps we shouldn't get too caught up in any movement, but

simply seek to remain true to biblical suppositions. I'm not even sure if all these labels are worth their characterizations anyway. Everyone seems so serious about defining ourselves.

If experience serves as a teacher, we may be on the doorstep of still more confusion. I've been an Arminian, a Calvinist, a Baptist, a Lutheran, a liberal, a conservative, a pre-tribber, a mid-tribber, a son, a father, a philosopher, and a philo-SELF-er. The bottom line is that Christ and Him crucified has been the only constant in my life. He has seen me through all those days of extremes, and He will be my Lord whether I'm a postmodernist, modernist, or a neo-modernist. The name game is only that, a game.

But on a lighter note, I want to be the guy that started the neo-modernist movement. HAHA.

Kris Samons

Probe Ministries

"What Do We Do When Critics Point to the Atrocities of the Crusades?"

This is a great website. I have benefited from the strong biblical perspectives you provide here and on AFR Radio station KAMA in Sioux City, Iowa.

What I am looking for is accurate info regarding the Crusades. Everywhere I turn, some "bible basher" is criticizing Christianity for all the people it has murdered in the name of

religion. . .the Crusades is ONE of those examples that is thrown in our faces. We want to know how to intelligently respond with FACTS.

What do you have that could help?

Dear _____:

Thank you for your recent e-mail regarding the Crusades. Let me see if I can give you some help on this.

To begin with, a Christian response to charges like this one must be honest with the facts of history. The truth of the matter is that the historical, institutional Church and true, Biblical Christianity have not always been synonymous. There is no way that we should try to defend or excuse those times and incidents where the Church has erred from her calling and failed to emulate and model the teachings of its Founder. In short, the Christian Church, in all of its forms—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant—has a "checkered" past. Where the church has failed, we must agree with our critics. The Pope's recent apology in Jerusalem for the Church's failure to take the lead in preventing the Holocaust is a current example.

But we should also know our history, and the Crusades is a good case in point. Most critics of our faith make sweeping generalizations about the Church's failure in a certain issue or event (like the Crusades) and assign to her *all* the blame. Another tactic is to just ignore other factors which might interfere with the case they are trying to make against Christianity.

This is not a new problem. Tertullian, one of the early church fathers (c.200 A.D.) complained that whether the Tiber flooded, or there was an earthquake, or a famine, etc., Rome's answer was, "The Christians to the Lions!"

It is important for us in historical analysis to make a clear

distinction between the ideals, teachings, and practices of Our Lord and the lives, and often questionable behavior, of all professing Christians—be they ecclesiastical bodies, "Christian" nations, or individuals. In short:

> Renaissance popes are **not** Christianity; St. Francis of Assisi **is.**
> Pizarro and Cortez are **not** Christianity; Bartolome de Las Casas **is.**
> Captain Ball, a Yankee Slaver, is **not** Christianity; William Wilberforce **is**.

And when we come to the Crusaders, we find we are faced with a "mixed multitude." First, we have the Pope, who, along with his colleagues, thought it shameful the Holy Land was possessed by the infidel. Secondly, we have genuine parishioners, from peasants to nobles, who sincerely desired to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These tens of thousands went with a true spiritual purpose (many died on the way) and are not guilty of the charge above. And third, we have a large contingent of men who were motivated by two primary things: economic gain, and the automatic promise from the Church that they could "skip" Purgatory" and be assured of heaven if they "took up the Cross" and died fighting in their mission to reclaim the Holy Land for Christianity. This Christian "*Jihad*" could be said to have promised "All this, and heaven too!"

If you want a good book about this, I would recommend a readable volume simply entitled *The Crusades* by Zoe Oldenbourg. You should be able to get it in any library. It was published in 1966 by Pantheon Books. Oldenbourg is a Russian Jewess who lived much of her life in Paris.

This book almost reads like a novel and is fascinating.. Before she begins her account she gives a marvelous description of what western Europe was like at the time of the Crusades. Conditions were, at the time, just the opposite from what they are today. Now, the wealth and industry is in the

West, while the Middle East is blighted and "third-worldish" (excepting huge wealth in the East held by the few who control vast oil holdings), then, it was the West that was blighted and primitive, while the Middle East possessed vast wealth and contained great, opulent cities.

Many of the Crusading Knights who joined the Crusades were second and third sons, who were not entitled to an inheritance because of the practice of *primogeniture*—the exclusive right of the first born to a Father's Estate. From the "get-go" these men demonstrated their prime motive for joining the Crusade: economic gain.

From beginning to end, the Crusades are truly a trail of tears. . .from the (1) pogroms in various cities where thousands of Jews died at the hands of the Crusaders as they journeyed East toward the Holy Land, to the (2) "peeling off" of many knights as the great cities of the Levant were reached [Edessa, Tarsus, Aleppo, Damascus, Antioch, Acre. Some of them never even got to Jerusalem! Greedily, they captured a city by force, put themselves in charge, and lived in new-found luxury], to (3) the capture of Jerusalem and the complete massacre of all its inhabitants—both Jews and Muslims, to the (4) other sorry Crusades that followed, the last of which, when the Crusaders found themselves at the gates of Constantinople, decided to just attack and sack *it* instead!

Other "black marks" which critics pounce on include: (1) virulent anti-Semitism, practiced by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and even Protestant (including Martin Luther himself), (2) the Inquisition, (3) the torture and burning of heretics and witches, (4) the practice of slavery, (5) the treatment and destruction of native populations [the Irish, the Indians of the Americas, the African Tribes, the island populations in both Oceans], (6) treatment of women, and (7) all "Religious" wars.

Here again we cannot defend the actions of "Christian" people.

We must quickly agree with our critics. At the same time, we must press home the idea *that the Church is **not** our model. . . **Jesus** is.* Where His teachings and His personal example have been followed many positive things have helped to change society in such ways that much of the world is still benefiting from His impact. Even the critics have to recognize this.

I will close with these quotes written by three eminent historians, R.R. Palmer, Roland H. Bainton, and W.E.H Lecky:

> "It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the coming of Christianity. It brought with it, for one thing, an altogether new sense of human life. For the Greeks had shown man his mind; but the Christians showed him his soul. They taught that in the sight of God, all souls were equal, that every human life was sacrosanct and inviolate. Where the Greeks had identified the beautiful and the good, had thought ugliness to be bad, had shrunk from disease and imperfection and from everything misshapen, horrible, and repulsive, the Christian sought out the diseased, the crippled, the mutilated, to give them help. Love for the ancient Greek, was never quite distinguished from Venus. For the Christians who held that God was love, it took on deep overtones of sacrifice and compassion." (Palmer)

> "The history of Christianity is inseparable from the history of Western culture and of Western society. For almost a score of centuries Christian beliefs, principles, and ideals have colored the thoughts and feelings of Western man. The traditions and practices have left an indelible impression not only on developments of purely religious interest, but on virtually the total endeavor of man. This has been manifest in art and literature, science and law, politics and economics, and, as well, in love and war. Indeed, the indirect and unconscious influence Christianity has often exercised in avowedly secular matters—social, intellectual, and institutional—affords striking proof of the dynamic

forces that have been generated by the faith over the millenniums. Even those who have contested its claims and rejected its tenets have been affected by what they opposed. Whatever our beliefs, all of us today are inevitable heirs to this abundant legacy; and it is impossible to understand the cultural heritage that sustains and conditions our lives without considering the contributions of Christianity.

"Since the death of Christ, his followers have known vicissitudes as well as glory and authority. The Christian religion has suffered periods of persecution and critical divisions within its own ranks. It has been the cause and the victim of war and strife. It has assumed forms of astonishing variety. It has been confronted by revolutionary changes in human and social outlooks and subjected to searching criticism. The culture of our own time, indeed has been termed the most completely secularized form of culture the world has ever known. We live in what some have called the post-Christian age. Yet wherever we turn to enrich our lives, we continue to encounter the lasting historical realities of Christian experience and tradition." (Bainton).

". . .[T]he greatest religious change in the history of mankind took place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians who disregard as contemptible powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men." (Lecky, *History of European Morals*).

Hope this helps answer your question, _____.

Jimmy Williams
Founder, Probe Ministries

P.S. I'll have to dig out the reference sources for Palmer and Bainton, but wanted to get this to you now.

“What are the Best Scientific Evidences for a Young Earth/Old Earth?”

I read with great interest your article on the Origins Web site “Christian Views of Science and Earth History .” I am doing research on this age issue, focusing on the scientific data especially. The earth is either young or is old. You said it well, “all truth is God’s truth.” I am looking for the best scientific evidences for a young earth/old earth and want to investigate what the other side would say to those opposing arguments. Can you help me out with this?

There are several books I can recommend.

From a biblical perspective, there is a recent volume titled *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* edited by J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds in the Counterpoints series from Zondervan (1999). Hugh Ross has his *The Genesis Question* for an old earth perspective, and there is Henry Morris’s *The Genesis Record* and John Whitcomb’s *The Early Earth* from a young earth perspective.

From a scientific perspective, Hugh Ross wrote his definitive biblical and scientific treatise on the old earth called *Creation and Time* in 1994 from NavPress. Young earth creationists Van Bebber and Taylor published a response titled *Creation and Time: A Report on the Progressive Creationist Book by Hugh Ross* also in 1994 from Eden Productions. ICR (The Institute for Creation Research) has published numerous technical monographs on a young earth which can be viewed and ordered at www.icr.org. Other young earth books, including Russ Humphrey’s *Starlight and Time* can be found there, as well

as at the Answers in Genesis website, www.AnswersinGenesis.org. Hugh Ross' organization Reasons to Believe also has online ordering at www.reasons.org.

This should give you more than enough to get started on.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Are the Ideas of the Jesus Seminar Now Catholic Doctrine?"

I am a philosophy major at Oregon State University where Marcus Borg is a professor. Many of the churches in our community ascribe to his teaching.

Here is my question…I have a dear friend that grew up in an evangelical Catholic home and knows Christ as her personal savior. She has been attending the local Catholic church here in Corvallis and recently has been strongly confronted by one of the deacons on issues surrounding the literalism of the Bible (i.e. the ideas of the Jesus Seminar, taught by Borg). The deacon has been telling her that Biblical non-literalism as Borg teaches is part of Catholic doctrine and part of the Catechism. Is this accurate? Is this indeed an international Catholic teaching or does it depend on the individual parish or person?

I would appreciate any wisdom you might have on this topic. Honestly, it's been really heated here lately, as Borg's new

book has just been released. We would love it if either of you (or other speakers from Probe) could come out and do a presentation for all of the confused Christians. There is a strong evangelical movement in Corvallis, but unfortunately, it tends to be strongly anti-intellectual and isn't well respected in the university community. As a student, I want to be able to better understand the critical issues at hand and be able to represent Christ in grace, truth, and love.

Send me whatever thoughts you have…I read article on the Jesus Seminar through Leadership University and that helped, but I really would love even more detailed information if you have any.

Thank you so much for serving as a resource for students of the Word!

Thank you for your recent e-mail concerning the Jesus Seminar. I can empathize with your "dilemma" under the shadow of Marcus Borg at your university.

I don't know if you have checked the Probe Website (www.probe.org) or not, but I would direct you to at least two essays: one that I wrote is called The Jesus Seminar, and a second was written by my colleague, Rick Wade, entitled The Historical Christ. You will find good bibliographical info for further study.

I would rather doubt that the tenets of the Jesus Seminar are now officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. I would recommend that your friend ask for official, written documentation from this priest for his assertion that this is true. I am 99% positive that no such position has been taken by the Catholic church and its biblical scholars. There is too much at stake for the church to take such a radical stand which undermines much of what they have held to be true about Jesus Christ.

If you are looking for someone to come and debate Borg, I

would suggest that you contact my good friend Dr. J. P. Moreland and/or Michael J. Wilkins at Talbot Seminary in southern California. They edited a book entitled *Jesus Under Fire* which was published by Zondervan in 1995. Each chapter is written by a evangelical scholar, each of which develops and refutes the major arguments of the Jesus Seminar position.

I have been studying this topic for several years, and following the literature, but these men, as New Testament Scholars, are current on this issue and have devoted the kind of study and depth necessary to give good account of themselves with a fine scholar like Borg.

I can appreciate your frustration with the general Christian community. Most are not "armed" for the battle of ideas which we face. That is why I left Campus Crusade in 1973 and began Probe Ministries. At the time I gave oversight to the Campuses in the Southwest U.S. The worldview America has come to embrace generally now once existed only on a few campuses: UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, U. of Wisconsin (Madison), Columbia U., and U. of Colorado.

I found myself hard pressed to respond to the questions of these students. So I decided the Lord was calling upon me not to "curse the darkness", but rather "light some lamps!" The early Christians, it is said, were effective because they OUT-THOUGHT and OUT-LOVED the ancient world! In fact, for 250 years after the apostles died off, the church did nothing but try to survive and answer/refute/respond to all the doctrinal challenges which came from the Jewish and Pagan communities without, and from sects and heresies within. They were so busy doing this, that it was not until 325 A.D. (Council of Nicea) that the addressed/clarified the doctrine of the Trinity! The FIRST theology of the early church was APOLOGETICAL theology, and we find ourselves facing the same kind of circumstances and challenges today.

So you hang in there! And tell your friend to do the same.

Challenge the priest and don't be bullied by him. If it IS an official position, tell her that I requested that it be documented so I will be able to confirm to others who ask that this is truly official. If I were a betting man (and I am ::::SMILE!::::), your friend will find that no such affirmation of this policy will be forthcoming.

With Warm Regards in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

"How Do I Talk to Family Members About Freemasonry and Edgar Cayce?"

I have just finished reading and re-reading your articles, "Freemasonry and the Christian Church" and "Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping (False) Prophet."

I have been attempting some research on Freemasonry, since I recently considered joining the Lodge. Have no fear; I no longer have any desire to be a Mason, since it clearly conflicts with my relationship to Christ. However, my grandfather is a 33rd degree Mason and my wife's grandparents are heavily involved in Freemasonry. He is a past Master (whatever that means), and they both attend meetings and other events (mostly with Eastern Star) several times a week. I know that this year, they are the "Worthy Matron" and "Worthy Patron" for their Eastern Star chapter here in _____. My wife also has a cousin who is planning on joining the Lodge after

he leaves the armed forces. They all profess to be Christians. I also have an aquaintaince at work who is a Mason – he wears two masonic rings with the compass, square, and "G" symbols. I don't believe that he is a Christian.

My grandfather is also a fan of Edgar Cayce. He has numerous books with his healings and such. He once told me that the two books he reads are the Bible and one of Cayce's.

So my question is, how can I bring up the subject with any of them? I don't know if there are others in the family who are deceived, and don't know who to ask about it. I am very concerned about this issue, since both my wife and I lost our other grandfathers less than two years ago. They were both dedicated to the Lord and we know that we will be with them in His presence for eternity. I want to be sure where our surviving grandparents will be when they pass from this life to the next. My wife's grandfather just turned 71 and my grandfather will be 81 in October.

There is a definite need to educate the Church on this issue. I probably would not know about it if I hadn't been interested in joining.

Thank you for your ministry, and for the biblical truth that you proclaim.

Thanks so much for your question and your desire to learn how to address such an obviously sensitive issue. Freemasonry has a lot of baggage that makes it oftentimes a heated topic of discussion.

Given the fact that there is a great deal of mystery as to the history and heritage of freemasonry, it would be a mistake to say a Mason cannot be a Christian. Much of it has religious undertones. The question must be, "What kind of religion?" Many in the church have had and still do have a close relationship with this "fraternity." Paganistic religion has also historically been a large contributor to masonic ritual.

Depending upon your chosen masonic historian, the history of freemasonry can deal more with one than the other (Christianity and paganism).

Without a doubt, freemasonry is clouded with both Christian and pagan influence today. I'm sure, since you have read our articles on freemasonry and Edgar Cayce, that you know their inconsistencies with biblical faith. That brings us to your question. "How can I bring this up and be assured that my family members are grounded in biblical faith in Jesus Christ?"

It is not necessarily a given that these family members do not know Christ just because of their association with groups and teachers that are misleading. But it is certainly reason for concern. Perhaps you could open a discussion with some questions for them about some of the basic teachings of freemasonry. Since you have shown interest in the past in joining the lodge, they may not see it as "too nosey" for you to be asking questions about freemasonry. You could, for instance, ask what the lodge teaches about Jesus? The answer you get is likely to be quite subjective to the particular person you ask. One Mason may say that they teach that Jesus is the only Son of the Father God who redeemed mankind through His atonement, while others may answer that He is one among many religious types to pay heed to. Regardless, you have a segue here that can lead you to share with them who He really is.

Another question worth asking your family members would be on their view of Scripture. "Is the Bible a unique sacred writing to the Masons?" Again, their view is subject to be quite broad. But you have an opportunity here to probe them to not only answer your questions, but possibly to ask those questions themselves. There is a very good chance that you will be the first person to bring this up in discussion for them. The uniqueness of Scripture makes it substantially superior to the Bhagavad Gita and the Koran, to name only a

few. Therefore, you have another inlet for substantial dialogue on the exclusivity of the Christian faith versus the religious pluralism of the masonic perspective.

There are many other subjects of discussion that you may strike a chord with. But the pervading sentiment must be one of humble inquiry. Don't be pushy or opinionated. They will most likely be attracted to your desire to learn from them. Any scent of your attempts to change their minds or to get them out of the lodge will almost definitely send them running. So be honestly interested in what they have to tell you, no matter how off the mark it is. Remember, you are bringing up this conversation in order to determine their destination for eternity. So love them, above all else. Their membership to the lodge is not what determines their fate. It is their relationship to the true Master of all, Jesus Christ, that will chart their eternal course.

I pray that your efforts to bring up these matters before your family will end in a fruitful harvest, also resulting in a deeper relationship between you and your grandparents, cousin, and even your co-worker.

Thanks so much for your e-mail. God rewards those who seek Him.
Proverbs 2:3-5

Kris Samons
Probe Ministries

See Also *Probe Answers Our Email*:

"How Can Masons Be Prominent Leaders in the Church?"

“How Can I Prepare for College?”

Dear Mr. Bohlin,

I will be attending Cornell University in the fall of 2000. My declared major is pre-med, biochemical engineering. I will also attending the Mind Games conference in July. Can you suggest any Christian reading materials for me so that I can be prepared for the conference in July, but most importantly, so I can be prepared for Cornell in August as a Christian.

Good to hear we will see you in July! I am looking forward to meeting you and spending the week together.

I would recommend Jim Sire’s book, *The Universe Next Door*, as a good place to start. Worldview is an essential concept to the conference and Sire maps out the different worldviews in a concise manner. Considering your future major, I would recommend *Darwin’s Black Box* by Michael Behe and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* by Phillip Johnson for starters. If Sire proves interesting reading to you and you are wondering where some of these strange ideas came from, you might look for a copy of Francis Schaeffer’s *How Should We Then Live?* which briefly (258 pages) traces the historical development of philosophy, theology, art and science in the west. Though the book is over twenty years old, Schaeffer turned out to be an accurate prophet of where things were headed. So, read Sire first and take on the others as time, money and interest dictate.

See you in July.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
Probe Ministries

“Abortion Isn’t Your Decision to Make For Others”

You assume your belief in the bible is the truth. If you disregard that book of stories to live by, then the arguments of right and wrong are invalid.

Now if your points against abortion were based on your feeling of terminating a life, not what you are told in a book then I would have much more respect for your point of view.

For those who feel abortion is wrong…. good for them, they have that choice… others choosing to have an abortion will deal with it.

It’s not your decision to make for others. You must understand that we all don’t subscribe to your beliefs… and that’s the great thing about our country, we are free to do as we feel right based on our upbringing.

I hope I have not misinterpreted your writings on this web page.

Thanks for writing about my abortion article at the Probe Ministries site.

> *You assume your belief in the bible is the truth. If you disregard that book of stories to live by, then the arguments of right and wrong are invalid.*

Yes, I do assume that the Bible is true. Just as you assume

that your beliefs are true. I used to dismiss the Bible as a fanciful “book of stories to live by,” but after I found out how unusual it is, how incredibly consistent it is internally even though written by scores of authors on four continents within a span of thousands of years, I came to the conclusion that it was actually quite a miraculous book, inspired by God, and worth my trust.

If we disregard the Bible, which claims to be God’s communication with us, then why even talk about issues of right and wrong? Without God in the picture, who says there IS a right and wrong? Without God, the universe just IS. No meaning, no purpose—and certainly no right and wrong.

> *Now if your points against abortion were based on your feeling of terminating a life, not what you are told in a book then I would have much more respect for your point of view.*

So, if I based my position against abortion on feelings alone, you could respect that. . .but since I base my position on what I completely believe to be God’s revealed truth, it’s fluff? Feelings are a dangerous basis for opinions; they often have nothing in common with reality. How do you know that that $20 bill in your wallet is actually worth $20? Somebody told you it was, right? Does that make that belief invalid? But if you use that bill to buy $20 worth of merchandise, a store will accept that money. That’s because it corresponds to reality. I believe that my position on abortion—regardless of where I got those beliefs—also corresponds to reality. The question that ought to be asked about my position is not “where did you get it,” but “is it true?”

> *It’s not your decision to make for others. You must understand that we all don’t subscribe to your beliefs… and that’s the great thing about our country, we are free to do as we feel right based on our upbringing.*

I’m sorry, where did you read that I make a decision for anyone else? I state that abortion is wrong because God says that it’s wrong. I state that abortion is hurtful because that’s what experience teaches us. That’s a long way from stopping someone from having an abortion. You are more than free not to subscribe to my beliefs; but why would you challenge my right to hold them? I don’t know how you ended up at that article, but the way the Internet works, you had to go out and search it out. It seems rather strange to me that you would look for and read an article on abortion, then castigate the author for not agreeing with you. . .???

> *I hope I have not misinterpreted your writings on this web page.*

Well, I think you probably have, but that’s your right. Almost all the articles at the Probe site started out as radio transcripts for a 5-minute program that airs on about 400 Christian radio stations; then we put the transcripts online. I’m glad you read it, even though I’m not sure why you would want to, if you so easily dismiss others’ positions if they’re based on revelation and not gut feelings.

But have a good day.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries