

“Your Comments About Eating Animals Are Unintelligent and Illogical”

I read your response to the question [“Why Did God Allow Animals to be Eaten and Sacrificed?”](#) and found it to be one of the most unintelligent arguments on any subject that I have ever read. Your “logic” draws conclusions in very convoluted ways. Recognizing an animal’s right to life does not drag man down to the level of a beast. If ALL life is valued then human life is valued more. There would be no “‘open season’ on man to cure overpopulation problems...” as you suggest. There is no ultimate NEED for humans to get their diet from animals. Even Daniel recognized that he could be as healthy as [email ends here]

Thanks for writing. Jimmy isn’t able to respond to your email, so I’ll take a shot at it.

I’m really surprised you found this “the most unintelligent arguments on any subject [you] have ever read.” You should read some of the letters we get!

Upon what do you base an animal’s right to life? The answer to that will depend in a significant way upon your worldview. We are Christians, so our authority is the Bible where we learn about the places of humankind and other living beings in God’s order.

Because we’re to be good stewards of God’s creation, we are not to destroy life willy nilly. As Jimmy wrote in his article, there is a hierarchy. I think you’d probably agree that we needn’t shed tears over pulling up plants when they

are being a problem. Killing animals should be for good reasons, not just for killing's sake. You said we don't need to eat animals. Maybe not, but I don't see why we need to eat animals in order to do so. If God gave us that freedom, we can engage in it (Gen. 9:1-3).

Jimmy's concern about man being pulled down has historical precedent. The loss of a belief in the sacredness of human life has given us abortion and euthanasia. Can you imagine a hundred years ago having to pass a law to prevent doctors from sticking sharp objects into the skulls of partially-delivered babies to suck their brains out and kill them? That would have been unthinkable. But people think they should be able to do that. What does that say about the value of human life? And if Darwinism is correct, then there is no qualitative difference between humans and animals, just a difference of degree.

Yes, Daniel and his friends did well on a vegetarian diet. But there's no hint in the text that he did that because he thought it wrong to eat meat. The Babylonians' meat could very well have been obtained as a part of idol worship.

The bottom line is that we have been given permission to eat any living (non-human) thing. Animals don't have the same "rights" we have. To make a case that animals shouldn't be used for food because they have a right not to, requires a reason for such a right. On what do you base such a right?

Rick Wade

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“Will Greater Evil Merit Greater Punishment in Hell?”

Will those who have done greater evil on earth receive greater punishment in Hell?

I think so. Luke 12:47-48 seems to lend some justification to this view.

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.”

And consider Matthew 11:21-24:

“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Of course, there is no reason that anyone need be sent to Hell. Even the most vile sinner can be cleansed and forgiven through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, etc.).

But for those who reject Christ and persist in their sin and disobedience, there does seem to be a biblical basis for believing that there are gradations of punishment in hell—just as there are different levels of reward in heaven (1

Corinthians 3:10-15, etc.).

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Him,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Was Jesus Actually a Pharisee?”

[I am] an Indian Christian, residing in southern India. I shall be grateful if you could help with a question. The other day I ran into the following quote from [“The Passion” From a Jewish Perspective](#):

“I would suggest that Jesus argued so much with the Pharisees because he was closest to them and it is not by chance that they are absent from the Gospel Passion narratives. Indeed, Jesus may even have been a Pharisee.”

Could you please let me know if Jesus was indeed a Pharisee, as suggested? Also, could you please let me know the things I need to know pertaining to the [other] question at hand? I thank you beforehand for your patience in helping me with my request.

Thanks for your letter. No; I don't think it likely that Jesus was a Pharisee. Consider the following:

1) Jesus is nowhere called a Pharisee in the New Testament. With as much talk of Pharisees as we find there, this would

be a very strange omission indeed! There is simply no positive evidence to support this thesis.

2) The Pharisees are mentioned quite often in the Gospels during Passion Week (the week before Jesus' death).

3) The Pharisees are mentioned in John 18:3 as part of the group that came to arrest Jesus. It seems to me that this could be considered as evidence that the Pharisees are indeed mentioned in the passion narratives.

4) Consider how Jesus often speaks of the Pharisees. Read Matthew 23 and note how the Pharisees are spoken of by Jesus. He says to His disciples, do what they tell you but not what they do (Matt. 23:2-3). He repeatedly calls them "hypocrites," etc.

5) Finally, in passages like Matt. 9:14 Jesus seems to be distinguished from the Pharisees. The passage says, "Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" If Jesus was a Pharisee, then why weren't His disciples fasting as well? Jesus seems to be distinguished from the Pharisees by the way the question is asked.

In all these ways (and others I've not mentioned) the New Testament gives repeated indications that Jesus was not a Pharisee.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

See also the Probe resources on the historical Jesus listed under related posts.

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

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

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

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

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

But I can tell you what we believe. God does, indeed, know every single detail of the future, which is why the Bible contains accurate prophecy of future events—because not only did God know they would (and will) happen, but because He is sovereign, He superintends them.

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

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

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Where in the Bible Does It

Prove that Jesus Was 100% Man and 100% God?"

Thanks for your question! There are actually many biblical passages which teach both the deity and humanity of Christ. I've listed just a few for your consideration.

1. Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Note that the promised Messiah (or Christ) would be born as a son to Israel. He was thus a Man. At the same time, however, His name will be called Mighty God, etc. He is thus also God.

2. Micah 5:2-3 (quoted in Matt. 2:6)

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

Again, Messiah is born of a woman (v. 3) to be ruler in Israel (v. 2). He is thus a Man. However, His goings forth are "from the days of eternity" (v. 2). He thus had no beginning and

must therefore be God (Who alone is eternal).

3. John 1:1-3, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Notice that the Word is God (v. 1). Notice also that the Word became a human being (v. 14). Jesus is both God and Man.

4. Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is a classic passage on both the deity and humanity of Christ.

5. Colossians 1:13-23

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and

brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,
14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over
all creation.
16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and
on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or
rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for
him.
17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold
together.
18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the
beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in
everything he might have the supremacy.
19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things,
whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace
through his blood, shed on the cross.
21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your
minds because of your evil behavior.
22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body
through death to present you holy in his sight, without
blemish and free from accusation—
23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not
moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the
gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every
creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a
servant.

Again, this passage strongly affirms both the deity (v. 19)
and humanity (v. 22) of Jesus.

These are just a few passages which can be offered. Many
passages, taken in isolation, affirm either the deity of
Christ on the one hand, or His humanity on the other. When all
this evidence is taken into account, it becomes clear that the
Bible repeatedly affirms that Jesus was indeed the unique God-
Man.

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Where Do I Find Biblical Support for the Trinity?”

I'm having a hard time with the issue of the Trinity in terms of finding support for this concept in the Bible. I am searching your website and other sites to get a handle on this doctrine. I need to be well versed on this issue as I am in a discussion with two Jehovah's Witnesses where we will be addressing the explanation of the Triune nature of God. All of the other issues I can address and I'm doing okay, but the Trinity has got me a little stumped right now. Can you help me?

I'm so glad you wrote!! I can imagine why you would be having a hard time with the concept of the Trinity if Jehovah's Witnesses are talking to you. And that's why I'm doubly glad you have access to the Probe website to help you be grounded in the truth, as well as equipping yourself to answer their faulty arguments.

The scriptural support FOR the Trinity is so strong that you have to work hard at finding proof texts AGAINST the Trinity! We have several excellent articles on the Trinity, written by a staff member (Pat Zukeran) who has extensive experience in dialoging with Witnesses. Start here:

[Why We Should Believe in the Trinity](#)

then go here:

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity

If you have further questions, we are available to answer them through e-mail (info@probe.org) or telephone.

I am sending this along with a prayer that the Lord will show you clearly and with the peace that accompanies His truth, His triune nature. (Consider, for example, the baptism of the Lord Jesus, where all three persons of the Godhead are present: the Father speaking His approval of the Son from heaven, the Son standing in the water in human flesh, and the Holy Spirit appearing as a dove Who came upon Jesus.)

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is It Small-Minded of Me to Base Morality on Scripture?”

A friend of mine and I were recently discussing different things and two things relating to scripture things came up. The first (what started the argument) was I asked whether morality could be determined by age; for example, we say that is wrong for a kid but OK for an adult. My view was, if something is wrong should it not be wrong for all? She is a Christian but made some comments I wasn't sure how to respond to. She implied that I “thought small” because after about thirty minutes of debate I realized my morality was based totally on scripture. When I said “moral” I meant biblical. She however was saying the Bible doesn't answer everything and it is up to society to decide, because as she pointed out not

every one is Christian and I needed to see the whole picture. This sounds immoral to me and in arguing it (using the Bible) she asked what seems un-biblical, yet I was stumped she said that "If the Old Testament grew into the New Testament then who's to say it isn't still growing?" She almost seemed to be implying that 1) scripture is not a complete canon yet and 2) it should change based on society. This seems very un-biblical and wrong but I wasn't sure how to respond effectively.

Thanks for your e-mail. The two questions you brought up show a great deal of insight on your part. I would be honored to help you work through these issues.

First, let's deal with morality. It's great that you base your moral behavior based on biblical principles. Unfortunately, not everyone is so wise. But even biblically speaking, there are some things that may be appropriate for some people that are not so wise for others. For instance, look at marriage. Wouldn't it be safe to say that a grown up married man is morally free to have sexual intimacy with his wife, but an unmarried teenage boy is not morally free to have sex with his girlfriend? Circumstances may determine some of our standards of behavior. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 that we are free to act the way we think we should (since we have been freed from the Law), but that we must first consider that our actions affect others. Christian morality is not based on a list of rights and wrongs, but on the law of love for one another. Sure, there are some things that are always wrong (such as murder), and some that are always right (such as love), but to say that every wrong is wrong for everyone is going to lead to trouble.

Your friend has a point that not every issue is covered specifically in the Bible. But the Bible's principles can be applied to every issue. So, in fact, to think biblically is to think about the "big picture." Society is actually more interested in keeping order than in encouraging morality. Age, therefore, does make a difference about what a person ought to

do; not because morality is relative, but because sources of weakness can be different in people.

The freedom that we Christians have to make decisions is kept in check with our biblically-minded discernment about what is best for others and ourselves.

To answer your second question: yes, the canon of Scripture is closed. The New Testament is not just a highlight in the evolutionary development of the Old Testament. It is the "New Covenant." It's called a covenant because Jesus Christ fulfilled in person the "Old Covenant's" purpose. Hebrews 1:1-2 points out that God has spoken in these "last days" in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the inspired foreshadowing of Jesus. The New Testament is the inspired testimony to His life and works. The first few centuries of Christians had divinely guided criteria for evaluating the worthiness of a letter to be included in the New Testament. (For more on this, see [Don Closson's article on the Web.](#)) Nothing society or anyone else can come up with since could come close to adding to what Jesus has already done.

Furthermore, Jesus is the Word of God. How can God's very presence on earth be matched? His ascension into the heavens ended His earthly ministry. In the same way, His ascension also ended any speculation about another testament. (That's why there can be no new New Testament.) When He spoke the words "It is finished" on the cross, it illustrates that there is nothing else to be revealed. All that is necessary now is the fulfillment of His New Covenant, with the ministry of God's Spirit (through His church) and Jesus' glorious return. Our job is not to write more books of the Bible in order to make it apply to society. Instead we need to take what's already there and interpret it's vital and timeless message to every new society.

I hope this helps with your questions. If you have any more questions or need some elaborating, please feel free to

respond. Awesome questions! He rewards those who seek Him.

Kris Samons
Probe Ministries

“What is the Purpose of God?”

Dear Probe,

I was having an interesting conversation with an atheist over at Wasteland Of Wonders [an Atheist/Agnostic Website and Message board] when the topic of ultimate purpose came up!

Now most believers in God, myself included, seem to say that if the universe just *is*, then it becomes a big pointless absurdity, almost like a sick joke!

However if God exists then the universe and everything in it has a purpose, but the fellow over at Wastelands of Wonder with whom I was chatting said the following :

“Okay then, what is the ultimate purpose of God’s existence? Don’t you just have the same problem with theism, but pushed back a level? If God “just is,” what purpose then is there for your existence?”

I have to say this question reminds me very much of the infinite regression problem of “If God exists then who made God?!”

The best I could think of was that God contains an explanation for himself and that was it! This question truly had me bedazzled and I was scratching my head looking for a decent, non-cop-out explanation! [Like God explains himself]

So may I ask, if you were asked this question by someone what would you say?

Thank you for the interesting question! Let me try to answer it this way:

First, there would seem to be an important difference between the two questions, "Why does the universe exist?", and "Why does God exist?" Today, most scientists and philosophers believe that the universe had a beginning; it is not eternal. However, if God exists at all, He exists necessarily and is therefore eternal. Thus, even though each question is asking WHY something exists, they are each asking this about very different kinds of things.

Second, it's important for us to remember that purposes can only exist within a mind. The dictionary on my desk defines "purpose" as follows: 1. something one has in mind to get or do; plan; aim; intention. 2. object or end for which a thing is made, done, used, etc. Clearly, nothing which lacks a mind can have purposes of this sort. Whatever purpose there is for the existence of impersonal things must come from intelligent, purposeful beings. As a general rule, such beings would also be personal. Here I am thinking primarily of man, but also of God and the angels if they exist. Of course, some higher animals may have what might be described as very limited sorts of purposes for some of the things which they do. But generally speaking, purposes are the products of intelligent, personal beings.

Thus, if the universe is simply a "brute fact," and was not brought into existence by a purposeful, intelligent being, there can be no ultimate purpose for its existence. If nothing exists outside the universe then clearly, going back to the previously given definition of purpose, there can be no object or end for which the universe came into existence. The universe can only have some ultimate purpose if it was created by an intelligent being who, in fact, had some purpose in

making it.

However, when we come to the question which you were asked, "What is the ultimate purpose of God's existence?", we need to pause and consider exactly what we are being asked. I think you are correct in seeing this question as a variant of that other, often-asked question, "Who made God?" While such questions can be asked, I honestly doubt whether they are truly meaningful.

In the case of the question, "Who made God?", the questioner seems to be assuming that whatever exists requires a cause of its existence. But this is not true. Actually, it is only what BEGINS to exist that requires a cause. The universe began to exist; therefore, the universe requires a cause of its existence. But God never began to exist; He is eternal. It is therefore meaningless to ask "Who made God?", for what is really being asked is something like "Who made the Unmade Maker?", or "Who created the Uncreated Creator?" Clearly such questions are meaningless.

I believe that the question, "What is the ultimate purpose of God's existence?" or "Why does God exist?", is probably a similar sort of question. If the Christian God exists, then He is eternal. It is therefore unnecessary to posit a cause of His existence. Furthermore, if the Christian God exists, then He is the Creator of everything (other than Himself, of course!).

But now go back to our definition of "purpose" mentioned earlier and remember that, since God is the eternal, Uncreated Creator of all that exists, there was clearly no one other than God who might have had a purpose for bringing Him into existence. Additionally, it would also be meaningless to ask what purpose God had for bringing Himself into existence. The notion of a self-caused being is absurd. In order for a being to cause its own existence, it would first have to exist – which is obviously absurd. But if the purpose of God's

existence cannot be explained by reference to an intelligent, purposeful being other than God, and if it can also not be explained by referring to a self-creative act of God Himself, I conclude that the question is probably meaningless.

Thus, while one can meaningfully ask about God's purpose(s) in creating the universe (and thus about the reason WHY the universe exists), one cannot meaningfully ask this question about God Himself. Probably, the question is simply meaningless. But if not, we could not possibly know "the ultimate purpose of God's existence" unless He tells us—and so far as I'm aware, He hasn't done so.

Hope this helps.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“What is the Purpose of a Painful Death?”

I know that the Bible tells us that man is appointed to die. That from dust we came, and to dust we return.

My question relates to what purpose a painful, terrifying death serves in God's plan. I realize that illness and tragedy can affect anyone at any age, but what purpose would God have (for example) for someone being trapped in a wrecked car and burning alive? I could give other examples of terrifying deaths that we all hear on the nightly news, but my question is: what is the purpose of the “way” we die? Why some die painlessly while others suffer a lonely, frightening death?

I don't think I have the definitive answer, but as a person who has experienced various kinds of pain in my life, I know a little bit about the kinds of things God accomplishes in us during times of great pain.

A painful death is really just another life experience, so it doesn't belong in a special category. One of the things that we unfortunately can't know, because death prevents any communication with the departed, is the testimony of God's faithfulness and power and glory in that horrible experience. His grace, presence and aid is available to those undergoing awful deaths if they are willing to receive it.

It seems to me that because pain can serve to develop character and deepen the heart, it's entirely possible that a difficult death can be the final experience of pruning and preparation for life after death.

Those who "suffer a lonely, frightening death" are in a particularly wide-open position to experience the compassion and presence of the God who promised "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). Just as even the smallest light is more appreciated in the deepest dark, I would suggest that the light of God's presence and love might be more apparent in a horrible death.

The testimonies of many of the martyrs who died excruciating deaths for the love of their Savior yet radiated God's peace and grace in the midst of great pain, is one of the things that leads me to this conclusion.

Granted, this would be about the death of believers. What is the purpose of a horrible death for unbelievers, I cannot say, but I still believe it has something to do with the light of God contrasted with the darkness of the heart.

The bottom line is that it is a mystery, I think, but this is the best I can do.

“Should I Be Alarmed by the Concept of Christian Hedonism?”

I am alarmed to hear about a concept called “Christian hedonism,” which my wife encountered in a Beth Moore study. As we were beating this around, I checked on the web and found that there were some philosophers, like Erasmus and Thomas More, who attempted to syncretize religion and hedonism together. But I see a difficulty with this just like I see a difficulty with the term “Christian existentialism.”

The first time you come across the term “Christian Hedonism,” it really does make you scratch your head, if not blanch. I understand! But other writers are developing this idea, which actually makes a lot of sense when you get into it. John Piper’s book *Desiring God* is about enjoying God. Here’s a great explanation on that: http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what_we_believe/christian_hedonism.html

Actually, I think it’s a great concept because we evangelicals need to connect our heads with our hearts. For too long, Christianity has been nothing but an intellectual exercise, with our hearts going untouched and, in many cases, unchanged. What a travesty! When we get caught up in God’s “wonderfulness,” there is a whole new motivation to cooperate in His transformation of our lives and hearts; we can eagerly open ourselves to Him out of love instead of sterile duty.

So, bottom line—I think Christian hedonism is a great concept,
and I hope it becomes increasingly contagious! <smile>

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries