

**COMMON QUESTIONS
PEOPLE ASK ABOUT
GOD AND CHRISTIANITY**



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NOTES

12. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH WAY IS RIGHT?

The aim of Biblical interpretation is to discover what the author meant by what he said. A helpful guide is to realize that every text has four contexts: first, the immediate context – carefully examining the flow of an argument and discovering what comes before and after the text you're studying; second, the context of the book - knowing the theme and the argument of the book that the text is in; third, the context of the Bible where does the passage fit in the progress of God's revelation?; fourth, the context of history, culture, literature and language.

RESOURCES

Protestant Biblical Interpretation by Bernard Ramm
The Literature of the Bible by Reichen
Personal Bible Study Methods by Rick Warren
Strange Scriptures That Perplex the Western Mind by Barbara Bowen
Literal Interpretation of the Bible by Paul Lee Tan
The Hard Sayings of Jesus by F. F. Bruce
More Hard Sayings of the Old Testament by Walter Kaiser
More Hard Sayings of the New Testament by Peter Davids

1. DOES GOD EXIST?

There are four basic arguments that demonstrate the existence of God. First, the argument from creation; since there is a universe it must have been caused by something beyond itself. Second, the argument from design; there's a great design in the universe therefore it must have a great designer. Third, the argument from moral law; all men are conscience of an objective moral law and moral laws imply a moral lawgiver. Fourth, the argument from being; God must exist by definition. We have the idea of God and that necessarily involves His existence.

RESOURCES

When Skeptics Ask by Norman Geisler, chapter 2
Answers to Tough Questions by Josh McDowell, pg. 65
I'm Glad You Asked by Kenneth Boa, chapter 3
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little, chapter 2
Reason to Believe, by R. C. Sproul, chapter 7

2. IF THERE IS A GOD, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD?

God cannot destroy evil without destroying freedom. Free beings are the cause of evil and freedom was given to us so we could love. Love is the greatest good for all free creatures but love is impossible without freedom. If evil is to be overcome we need to talk about it being defeated, not destroyed. Just because evil is not destroyed now doesn't mean it never will be. Because God is all good He will defeat evil and because God is all powerful He can defeat it. Evil is restricted in the world by God and while He does not cause evil He causes all things to work together for good — sometimes for correction, sometimes to teach us, sometimes to demonstrate His power and glory. (Romans 8:28-29; Hebrews 12:5-6; Job 42:5-6; John 9:2-3; Revelation 21:1-5)

RESOURCES

When Skeptics Ask, by Norm Geisler, chapter 4
The Case for Faith, by Lee Stroebel, chapter 1 and 4
Reason to Believe, by R. C. Sproul, chapter 8 and 9
I'm Glad You Asked, by Kenneth Boa, chapter 7
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little, chapter 10
A Ready Defense by Josh McDowell, section 4

11. CHURCH HISTORY IS LITTERED WITH OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE.

There is no question that church history has been littered with oppression and violence. These are sins that are contrary to the teaching of the Bible and Jesus Christ. There are five major blots on church history; the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Salem Witch Trials, exploitation by missionaries and anti-Semitism. Church leaders and other believers have acknowledged all of these as wrong and contrary to the Spirit of Christ. These blights are the exception and not the rule. Followers of Jesus Christ have blessed the world abundantly. The rapid expansion of the early church was due to its high moral standards, countless acts of service to mankind and unwavering allegiance to Jesus Christ. Christianity gives meaning to life in existence of universal morality. Christians have had a positive impact on literature, music, architecture, science and the arts. Christianity insists that every single human being is loved by the Creator and made in His image. It exalts humility and humble dependence upon God.

RESOURCES

The Case for Faith by Lee Stroebel, chapter 7
Turning Points in Church History by Mark Noll
Church History in Plain Language by Bruce Shelley
What If Jesus Had Never Been Born by D. James Kennedy

10. IF CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE WHY ARE THERE SO MANY HYPOCRITES?

Jesus Christ denounced hypocrisy, as does the entire Bible. Jesus Christ's character was perfect and His death, burial and resurrection is the basis of Christianity, not the performance of Christians. Not all who profess to be Christians are, in fact, so. Real Christians do not claim to live perfect lives. Even though believers sin, not all sin is hypocrisy. The word "hypocrite" applies to a person who pretends to be something he is not. But the prerequisite to becoming a genuine follower of Christ is an open acknowledgement that one is sinful, not righteous. There are hypocrites in all organizations and all walks of life. The existence of counterfeit money does not deter us from using the real thing in daily life.

RESOURCES

I'm Glad You Asked, by Kenneth Boa, chapter 10
A Ready Defense, by Josh McDowell, page 414
Questions Non-Christians Ask by Barry Wood, chap. 5
Objections Answered by R. C. Sproul, chapter 5

3. ARE MIRACLES POSSIBLE?

First we must define a miracle. A miracle is an event not producible by natural causes that are operating at the time and place that the event occurred. The question of whether the miracle occurred is dependent upon whether God exists. If God exists then miracles are possible. God by definition is not bound by the laws of nature. The laws of nature are generalizations about ordinary events caused by God. Miracles are unusual events caused by God. Biblical miracles are never offered as a mindless display of the supernatural. Nor are they done to gain money and power. Biblical miracles always have a definite purpose: to meet human needs and to authenticate God and the message He is delivering. Biblical miracles are clustered around Moses to Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus and the apostles. Biblical miracles, especially those performed by Jesus and the apostles are rooted in sober history with eye witness accounts and critics who refused to deny the miracle.

RESOURCES

When Skeptics Ask, by Norm Geisler, chapter 5
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little, chapter 8
I'm Glad You Asked, by Kenneth Boa, chapter 4
The Case for Faith, by Lee Stroebel, chapter 2
The Problem of Miracles by William Craig

4. SINCE EVOLUTION EXPLAINS LIFE GOD ISN'T NEEDED

Science is based on the belief that every event has a cause (causality) and that whatever caused some effect in the past will cause the same effect in the present (uniformity). Operation science deals with how things normally operate in the present, these are testable and predictable. Origin science deals with past singularities. These events were not observed and cannot be repeated. Scientists tried to discover the most likely explanation for these singular events. It is valid to look for intelligent primary causes of the universes. Two views are dominate: (1) The universe is the result of natural causes or (2) by supernatural. There is much evidence to refute evolution and demonstrate intelligent design of the universe.

RESOURCES

Darwin on Trial and Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds, by Philip Johnson
God the Evidence by Patrick Glynn
Darwin's Black Box by Michael Behe
Science of Intelligence by William Dembski
Refuting Evolution by Jonathan Sarfati
Of Pandas and People by Davis and Kenyon
Buried Alive (The Startling Truth about Neanderthal Man) by Jack Cuozzo
The Case for Faith, by Lee Stroebel, chapter 3
When Skeptics Ask, by Norm Geisler, chapter 10

9. HOW COULD A LOVING GOD TORTURE PEOPLE IN HELL?

Thirty-six times the New Testament declares the reality of hell. Twenty-six of these fell from the lips of Jesus Christ. (Luke 16:19-31) The one who said the most about hell, Jesus Christ, did the most to save us from it. He died on the cross and paid the penalty for our sin and rose from the dead in order to give us eternal life. God's heart is that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9). God has granted a pardon to those who repent and trust in Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) When people refuse to repent and accept the forgiveness of God through faith in Christ, the penalty is hell. God honors our human dignity and choice. He does not coerce people to come to Him. He values His image-bearers so much He will not annihilate them.

RESOURCES

The Case for Faith by Lee Stroebel, chapter 6
Reason for the Hope Within by Michael Murray
Four Views on Hell by Williams Crockett

8. WHAT ABOUT GOOD WORKS?

The Bible makes it clear that no amount of good works will get us to heaven for two reasons: 1. No matter how good you are, you have still sinned and God will not overlook sin (James 2:10, Romans 3:10-12, Romans 3:20, Romans 6:23); 2. No matter how good you are you will never be good enough because the standard is God's character (Matthew 5:48, Galatians 2:16). We are saved by grace through faith alone, but faith that saves is never alone. (Romans 3:28, Romans 4:1-16, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-10) True faith always expresses itself through works. (James 2:14-26, Hebrews 11) The Apostle Paul in Romans 4 and the Apostle James in James 2 are not debating face-to-face, but standing back-to-back fighting off two false views. Paul declares that good works can never earn our salvation (Romans 4, Galatians 2). And James declares that if you truly have faith it will show (James 2). The only belief that saves is the belief that behaves.

RESOURCES

I'm Glad You Asked by Kenneth Boa, chapter 11
Message: Faith Works by Pastor Steve King 10/8/00
Message: Experience the Reality of Christ by Pastor Steve King 04/22/01
The Gospel According to Jesus by John MacArthur
So Great a Salvation by Charles Ryrie
Loving God by Charles Colson

5. IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

The Bible claims divine inspiration thousands of times (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The evidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is first its uniqueness. It has a profound unity. It has 66 books combined to form one book. It speaks on hundreds of controversial subjects without contradiction. It's 45 plus authors writing over a period of 1,500 years unfold a storyline that would have been impossible to collaborate. The Bible has been miraculously preserved and there is no other book with greater worldwide circulation. The Bible displays a profound uniqueness in its unity, preservation, circulation, non-myth like character and age.

Second, Bible prophecy. When the Bible was written more than one-fourth of it was prophetic, predictions of the future. There are 2,000 prophecies in the Old Testament alone and hundreds in the New Testament: prophecies concerning a coming Messiah, (over 300 fulfilled in Jesus Christ), prophecies concerning the nations, the Jews, and many other historical events.

Third, the Bible is historically reliable. This is confirmed by archeology and the Bible's excellent manuscript evidence.

RESOURCES

Is the Bible True. By Pastor Steve King
When Skeptics Ask, by Norm Geisler, chapter 7
Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell
Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible by Irwin Lutzer
I'm Glad You Asked, by Kenneth Boa, chapter 6
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little, chapter 6
The Battle for the Bible by Harold Linsell

6. IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

Christians believe Jesus is the only way to God because He claimed to be the only way to God, (John 14:6, John 8:12, John 8:24, Acts 4:12 1 Timothy 2:5) and he supported his claims with solid historical evidence. The primary piece of evidence is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus predicted His own death, burial and resurrection (17 times), He appeared to over 526 eyewitnesses over a period of 40 days in twelve different appearances. The changed lives of His followers, the existence of the New Testament, the worship of the church on Sunday and solid historical evidence all support the reality of Christ's resurrection. Jesus also fulfilled over 300 prophecies pointing to a coming Messiah. He lived a sinless life, performed 39 recorded miracles, accepted worship as God and claimed He could forgive sins. If Jesus Christ was not the only way to God, then He was either a lunatic or a liar. Without Jesus Christ there is no solution to man's problem of sin and separation from God.

RESOURCES

[Jesus Among Gods](#) by Ravi Zacharias
[The Case for Faith](#) by Lee Stroebel, chapter 5
[Evidence That Demands a Verdict](#) by Josh McDowell
[Know Why You Believe](#) by Paul Little, chapter 3
[I'm Glad You Asked](#) by Kenneth Boa, chapter 8
[When Skeptics Ask](#) by Norman Geisler, chapter 6
[Mere Christianity](#) by C.S. Lewis

7. WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO'VE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS CHRIST?

God desires that all come into a personal relationship with Him. (1 Timothy 2:4) The Bible teaches that all know about God through creation (Romans 1:20), conscience (Romans 2:14-16) and God's providential working (Acts 14:17, 17:26). This knowledge of God renders man inexcusable (Romans 1-3). People are not judged because they have not heard of Christ, but for rejecting the knowledge of God they do have. If someone seeks God and responds to the knowledge of God they have, God will reveal more truth to them. If they continue to seek them, He will find a way to get the message of Christ to them so they can have salvation through faith in Christ. (John 9, Acts 8, 9, 10). God loves all people, He is all knowing, perfectly just and holy and His judgment will be righteous.

RESOURCES

[Eternity in Their Hearts](#) by Don Richardson (www.probe.org)
[I'm Glad You Asked](#) by Kenneth Boa
[Judge for Yourself](#) by Gordon Lewis
[Objections Answered](#) by R. C. Sproul
[Reasons to Believe](#) by R. C. Sproul, chapter 3