

The God of the Bible on Trial

Responding to Objections

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Why does God permit evil and suffering?

- One of the major objections to belief in God.
- If God is all-powerful, He can stop evil and suffering.
- If God is perfectly righteous, He certainly would.
- So an all-powerful, perfectly righteous God does not exist!

Why does God permit evil and suffering?

➤ Another alternative:

- Perhaps God has a perfectly good reason for permitting evil and suffering.

➤ What might the reason be?

- Consider 3 analogies.

Analogy #1: God as Hotel-Keeper

- ☞ When we check into a hotel, we expect to see everything just right:
 - Room clean, beds made, etc.
 - Right temperature, quiet, etc.
- ☞ Using this analogy, the argument against God has great force.
- ☞ But this is not the Bible's picture of God.

Analogy #2: God as Parent

- ☛ Parents cannot be good parents and give their children everything the child might like.
- ☛ If they do, the child will turn out to be a spoiled brat.
- ☛ The parent is concerned that the child grow up to be a good and responsible person.

Analogy #3: God as Novelist

- ☛ A novelist has a purpose for writing a story.
- ☛ This purpose may allow bad things to happen to the main characters.
- ☛ Sometimes we cannot tell whether the author is a good person until we see how the story ends.

God suffers with us.

- ☛ "In all their distress, he too was distressed..." – Isaiah 63:9
- ☛ "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" – Acts 9:4
- ☛ "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." – Matthew 25:45

Jesus the only way?

- Isn't it arrogant & presumptuous to say that Jesus is the only way to God?
- What about sincere people in other religions?

Jesus the only way?

- ☛ This *is* what the Bible says about Jesus:
 - "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – John 14:6
 - "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." – Acts 4:12

Jesus the only way?

- Relative sincerity is not enough.
 - "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." – Proverbs 14:12
 - None of us are perfectly sincere in any case.

The Person & Work of Jesus

- Jesus is the only being in existence who is both created and uncreated.
 - The Father and the Spirit are only uncreated.
 - All other beings are only created.
 - He alone *chose* to become created.

The Person & Work of Jesus

- As the only person who chose to become created, his obedience as a created being is voluntary, not owed.
- He can therefore give it away to those who trust in him.

The Person & Work of Jesus

- As God, he is able to suffer in a finite time what would take us forever to suffer.
- If we trust in him, the suffering he endured on the cross counts in place of our suffering in hell forever.
- Buddha, Zoroaster, Socrates, Mohammad, etc. are unable to do this for their followers.

Don't the Bible & Science Contradict?

- ✔ Certainly some interpretations of the Bible and nature are in conflict.
 - The belief that natural phenomena will account for all of reality disagrees with Biblical teaching.
 - The belief that the Bible teaches an earth & universe only a few thousand years old seems to disagree with scientific evidence for billions of years.

Don't the Bible & Science Contradict?

- ☛ These beliefs (naturalism, young earth) are not as solid as their proponents think them to be.
- ☛ See our presentations:
 - Scientific Problems for Scientism
 - Scientific Problems for Scientific Creationism

How Can Miracles Be Possible?

- ☛ Is the universe a closed system of cause and effect?
- ☛ There is an analogy between the actions of human minds and the miraculous.
- ☛ Certainly miracles are imaginable.
- ☛ The real question is: What is the evidence for a particular miracle?

Isn't Faith Blind & Irrational?

- ☛ Yes, some faith is blind & irrational.
 - Blind when you don't know who or what you are trusting.
 - Irrational when you do know, but the object of faith is unworthy of trust.
- ☛ We need to know what we are trusting and why.

Isn't Faith a Psychological Crutch?

- ✔ Yes, probably all faith functions this way.
- ✔ The questions to ask are:
 - Do I need a crutch?
 - Will this particular crutch hold me up when I really need it?

Isn't Being Good Good Enough?

- ☛ Yes, if you're good enough!
 - In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explains what the Ten Commandments really mean.
 - The Two Commandments:
 - Do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength?
 - Do you love your neighbor as yourself?
 - Only Jesus was good enough.

What about those who have never heard?

☞ There aren't any!

- All have heard God's general revelation:
 - Nature: God exists, is good, powerful.
 - Conscience: God exists, is good, we aren't.
 - All are sinners.
 - All can cast themselves on God for mercy.
 - God can only have mercy on the basis of Jesus' work of obedience and sacrifice.

What about those who have never heard?

- ☛ How much do we need to know about Jesus?
 - Perhaps nothing.
 - Consider the people before Jesus came.
 - But God would not have given the New Testament if it were not needed.

What about those who have never heard?

- ☞ We must not be depending upon our own goodness.
 - It is not sufficient.
- ☞ Nor upon the assurances of various (unauthorized) teachers.
- ☞ We must not presume upon God's forgiveness even while we continue going our own way.

Isn't the Bible just a matter of anyone's interpretation?

- No, the main message of the Bible is sufficiently clear that anyone who really wants to understand it can do so by reading and studying it.
- Drastic differences in understanding the Bible are due to various other forces at work:
 - Desire to have it come out our way.
 - Pressure of traditions, institutions.
 - Human and superhuman sin.

Isn't the Bible just a matter of anyone's interpretation?

- ☛ I can't prove this to you.
- ☛ You need to read and study it for yourself.

Isn't the Bible full of errors?

- ☛ The Bible reports many errors:
 - "The fool has said, 'There is no God.'"
- ☛ Many errors have been alleged, especially when statements are taken out of context.
- ☛ The Bible disagrees with many well-loved human ideas.

Isn't the Bible full of errors?

- ☛ The Bible occasionally uses paradox to get us to think:
 - Proverbs 26:4-5: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly..."
 - Matthew 19:20: "The first will be last, and the last first."
- ☛ Few thinkers have found this to be a major stumbling block.

How can I believe with all the hypocrites in the church?

- ☞ If there weren't hypocrites in the church, the Bible would be in error!
 - Acts 20:29-30; Revelation 3:1
- ☞ The presence of hypocrites doesn't keep you from parties, sporting events, classes.

How can I believe with all the hypocrites in the church?

- ☛ If Christianity is true, there won't be any hypocrites in heaven.
 - Better to spend a few years with them here than forever with them later!
- ☛ Where church discipline is properly administered, this problem is significantly reduced.

Doesn't faith give a person a license to sin?

- Many people think so, both among those who reject biblical Christianity and those who profess it.
- One who thinks profession of Christianity gives him/her a license to sin merely shows they have not had the change in inner nature that comes with real salvation.

How can I be sure I can go to heaven?

- ☛ Depends on what you mean by "sure."
 - If "know beyond a shadow of a doubt," no humans know anything at this level.
 - If "know for certain, even if the Bible is false," this is not biblical Christianity we are talking about.
 - If "know, given that the Bible is true," the Bible gives us sufficient information that we need not be in doubt.

What does the Bible say?

- ☛ God exists, is all-powerful, and perfectly good.
- ☛ We, by our own choice, are in rebellion against God.
- ☛ We will not win against Him, but He is graciously offering us pardon if we turn back to Him.

What does the Bible say?

- ☛ God is able to do this and still be righteous by having paid for our sins Himself in the person of His Son Jesus.
- ☛ Do we really want to return to Him?
 - If so, pray to Him, confessing your sin, asking for His forgiveness, turning your life over to Him.
 - He will freely forgive you.

What does the Bible say?

- ☛ If we don't really want to return to Him...
 - To know the Creator of the universe...
 - Then we wouldn't really be happy in heaven anyway...
 - Hell is the only alternative consistent with God's justice and mercy.
 - We won't be happy there either, but there is no final happiness apart from God.

The End

There is no end to objections to Christianity (in this life), but we have tried to help answer some.