

Top 10 Bible Questions

#1 - If God is so good and loving, why does He allow evil?

This is a flawed premise since it implies that we are in a position to say what is good and what is not good about God. We ourselves do not know what good is naturally, for we are not basically good. How then can we judge God?

Still, the question of evil persists, and we often hear the question "why?" in the aftermath of some tragedy. Remember, when God created the world, He created it perfect. That includes His creation of man. Yet, this "perfect" man was also given the freedom of choice, or an ability to choose. When Adam chose to disobey God, sin, death and suffering became an inevitable part of life. Romans 5:12 states, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned" (NLT). The evil in this world is a result of that original sin.

You may say, "Wait a minute, I didn't choose to sin. Adam did." Yet, the Bible teaches that we all have sinned (Romans 3:23). We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. We have a natural bent in us to do what is wrong. James 4:1 says that there is a "whole army of evil desires at war within you." At the same time, God gave us absolutes to live our lives by--standards that are found in the Bible. When we make choices that are contrary to those absolutes and standards, evil is the result.

C. S. Lewis put this question in proper perspective. He observed that it is idle for us to speculate about the origin of evil. The problem we all face is the fact of evil. The only solution to the fact of evil is God's solution, Jesus Christ [Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.; InterVarsity Press, 1966), p. 72]. Once you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you enter into the master plan that God has for you. For that reason, you can be assured of the promise in His Word, that "everything works together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them" (Romans 8:28 NLT). Sometimes what appears horribly evil and tragic can result in something good. Consider Joseph's assessment of his brother's wicked act of selling him into slavery. Understanding that God had allowed this to happen so that he could be a man of power in Egypt, Joseph said, "God turned to good what you [my brothers] meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people" (Genesis 50:20 NLT).

We may not always understand the "why's" of a certain tragedy, but we know the "Who" that will carry us through it. He promises, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God . . ." (Isaiah 43:2-3a NIV).

#2 -How can you Christians say that Jesus is the only way to heaven?

Are you saying that if a person does not believe in Jesus Christ, they are going to hell? Jesus Christ Himself said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 NKJV). If humankind could have reached God any other way, Jesus would not have had to die. His voluntary death on the cross makes this fact even more compelling.

Christians are not superior to any other person. A person who believes Jesus Christ is the only Son of God and proclaims that truth is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

#3 - Don't all religions teach the same thing?

"Don't all roads lead to God?" people often ask. "If a person is sincere in his or her beliefs, won't he or she get to heaven?" If you allow that all beliefs are true, then by what standards do you live? All belief systems cannot be true, because they cancel each other out. If you take time to look at what each religion teaches, you'll find that only Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again. Christianity differs from all other religions because it's the only one that offers grace. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on a cross for our sins, that He paid that debt in our place, and that if we will turn from our sin and follow Him, we can be forgiven and know that we will go to heaven.

#4 - How can a God of love send someone to hell?

God doesn't send anyone to hell. It was never His design to send people to hell. It breaks the heart of God to see man, made in His image, make the deliberate choice to go to hell. Hell was not made for people; it was made for the angelic being that rebelled against God, Satan. In Matthew 25:41, Jesus says the everlasting fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. Scripture also teaches, "[God] is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). That is why God sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place--to bridge the gap between sinful man and a Holy God. The gates of hell are locked from the inside. If you end up in hell, you will practically have to climb over Jesus to get there.

#5 -The reason I am not a Christian is because there are so many hypocrites in the church.

This excuse is often given by those who want to continue to live in darkness. They do not want to be brought into the light of Jesus Christ. Jesus does not say, "Follow the church," or, "Follow the people." Jesus says, "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9; Mark 8:34; John 12:26).

We are given the freedom to choose. We have the ability to sin--to make choices that are against the teachings of God. Church is not a meeting place for saints, but a hospital for sinners. The worst sin you can commit is to say no to God. It is a "Son" issue, not a "sin" issue. You will find hypocrites in the church because we are all sinners. You will also find people who are trying to live their life according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

I tried church before, but it didn't work for me. What did you try? Did you go to a church? Did you read the Bible? Did you ask Christ into your life? Did you trust in what Jesus claimed? Did you examine the claims of Christ? Most people know the Ten Commandments and the things that "thou shalt not" do. But the Bible also commands us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mark 12:30 NKJV). If you are not doing that, you are falling short in God's eyes. Christ is real. Many facts substantiate that truth. (Even Satan professed Jesus' deity.) And we shall come face to face with Him on the Judgment Day (Revelation 20:11-12).

#6 - What is the Apocrypha?

The Apocrypha consists of books added to the Old Testament by the Catholic Church that Protestants do not believe are canonical. They are books that were written in the 400 years span between Malachi and Matthew. However, it was not until AD 1546, in a polemical action at the Counter Reformation Council of Trent, did the Apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

Why is it that Protestants do not accept the Apocryphal books as inspired?

1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms.
2. They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are opposed or contrary with those of inspired Scripture.

3. They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.
4. Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha or offer any recognition to it as inspired by God.
5. The Jewish scholars of Jamnia (AD 90) did not recognize the Apocrypha as Scripture, and they have never been accepted as part of the Old Testament.
6. Many of the great Fathers of the early church spoke out against the Apocrypha.

Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period rejected the Apocrypha.

#7 - What is Atonement?

The doctrine of the death of Jesus for the sins of mankind is central to the Christian faith. It is this feature that separates Christianity from all other world religions. All other religions say that you must atone for your own sins, or earn your own forgiveness. The Bible and the Gospel say that this is impossible, and that is why Jesus died for us. The death of Jesus for the sins of mankind is the fundamental belief of Christianity. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3:

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..."

The need for Jesus to die for our sins lays on two major truths:

- Man is a sinner and atonement for his sins need to be made.
- God is holy, and sinful man will not be able to approach God until justification is complete.

The Bible states that man is a sinner (Romans 3:23). This simply means that we are not perfect, we have all made mistakes, and we all fall short of the perfect standard of God. This sin is what separates us from God and hinders us from ever spending eternity with Him.

The Bible also says that the wages of this sin is death (Romans 6:23). In other words, in order for reconciliation with God to be possible, the price of a death needs to be paid. Obviously, if we were to try and pay that price ourselves, it would be our end. Not only that, but since we are sinners, our sacrifice would be insufficient and imperfect.

Some have stated that Jesus came to show us how to overcome and correct our sins. Actually, Scriptures teach the opposite. It shares how it is impossible for man to change himself. Jeremiah 13:23 says:

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

So if we can't achieve salvation on our own, and cannot pay the price on our own, we run into a dilemma on how will we be able to attain salvation?

This might be a dilemma for us, but not for God. Romans 5:6-8 states:

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Therefore, Scriptures teach that Jesus came and took the penalty of our sin in order for us to receive forgiveness and be free from the consequences of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

#8 - Does Baptism save me?

This view is called Baptismal Regeneration. It is one that we have encountered and considered in the past, but do not prescribe to. There are several reasons for which we disagree with the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

First of all, the Apostles did not teach that baptism was necessary for salvation. Probably the most referred to proof text that is appealed to by Baptismal Regenerationists is Acts 2:38 where Peter says:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

At a cursory glance this passage seems to teach that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit. However, if one takes the time to examine the original Greek, the confusion that results in our English translations is cleared up.

There are two verbs in this sentence. The main verb is "repent", an aorist direct imperative. This refers to the initial act of repentance at salvation.

The second verb is "be baptized" which is an indirect passive imperative, and therefore does not give it the same direct command implied in the act of repenting.

The preposition "for" in the phrase "for the forgiveness of your sins" is the Greek *eis*. "For" is often automatically assumed to mean "in order to obtain". However, when we say: Take an aspirin for your headache, it does not mean to obtain a headache, but because you have a headache. That is the meaning of *eis* in this passage, as it is in Luke 5:13-14 and 1 Corinthians 10:2.

Therefore, what Acts 2:38 is actually teaching is that baptism is an act we do as a result of repentance and having been forgiven of our sins.

It's also intriguing that if Peter believed baptism was necessary for salvation, why didn't he include this element in his gospel presentations in Acts 3:19 and 4:12? Also, the Apostles didn't deem it necessary to include the command to baptize in their letter to the gentiles in Acts 15. "Well," one might say, "it was assumed!" Wouldn't it also have been assumed that they need to abstain from idols and fornication?

Peter's statement in his first epistle, chapter three, verses twenty and twenty-one, is often incorrectly interpreted as meaning that baptism in and of itself saves. I believe that he makes it incredibly clear that this is not what He means when he says:

...not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience...

It is not the act of baptism in water, but the identification with his saving death and resurrection. Look at Spiros Zodhiates Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible for the Greek break down.

The second reason we don't prescribe to Baptismal Regeneration is because it contradicts the Gospel of Grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 states:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Paul clarifies this even more when he wrote to Titus:

"He saves us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)

We do not disagree that baptism is a "deed of righteousness" that every person who has been born again should observe. However, we disagree that baptism is in any way necessary for salvation. Salvation either comes by grace or it does not. Either we are saved by God's unmerited favor, or we earn our salvation, therefore it is by works. There is no middle ground, they are mutually exclusive.

#9 - What is the Trinity?

The Trinity is frequently misunderstood and not always a simple concept to grasp. Someone once wrote "A God who can be fully understood is not fully God." The Trinity is the concept that there is one God, personal and knowable who manifests Himself in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures teach us that believing in the Trinity is an essential doctrine for our salvation. Jesus Himself stated in John 8:24, "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am (the He was added in), you shall die in your sins."

When Jesus identifies Himself as the "I am" He is obviously taking the Old Testament name that God gave to Moses, "I am that I am." It is quite clear that Jesus was referring to this name, and that the Jews understood this, because they tried to stone Him for blasphemy (John 8:58-59).

The point I want to bring out from this text, is that Jesus said, for unless you believe that I am...you shall die in your sins. In other words, the forgiveness of our sins is dependant upon our belief of Jesus as God.

The Scriptures clearly teach as well that the only one who can save us from our sins is God (Isaiah 43:25, Micah 7:18, Mark 2:7). Therefore, it was necessary that God Himself die for our sins and bring to us forgiveness.

It is also essential for our salvation to believe that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). Jesus in Matthew 12:31 speaks of the unpardonable sin. What is the unpardonable sin? He calls it the blasphemy of the Spirit.

The ministry of the Spirit is to convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. Without this ministry, none of us will come to saving grace. Now if we reject this ministry, and receive it not from God, we cannot come to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest ways to look at the Trinity is through the words of the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed was written by the early Church and adopted (in a slightly different version) by the Church Council at Nicea in AD 325:

I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,

God of God, light of light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made;
Who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
and was made man,
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again
according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory
to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

#10 - Where did Cain get his wife? Where did Adam & Eve's son's wives come from? If Cain married his sister (or possibly a niece) he committed incest and wouldn't that produce genetically defective children?

Genesis 5:4-5 tells us that Adam lived a long life of 930 years. He lived 800 years after the birth of his son Seth. We are told in verse 4 that Adam had other sons and daughters. God had told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply", to populate the earth and so we can assume that they had children for many years. The earth was in a nearly perfect state and the conditions physically and environmentally were ideal for the purpose of God.

There is little doubt that it was necessary for the first generation after Adam to pair off brothers and sisters to serve as parents for the following generation; if this did not happen the human race would have become extinct. In later generations it was possible for cousins and other more distant relatives to marry one another. Cain had no choice but to marry a close relative (sister or niece).

We need to note that according to biblical record there were no genetic imperfections at the beginning of the human race. God created Adam "in His image" (Genesis 1:27) and Adam was perfect in every way. The genetic defects as we experience today are the effects the Fall and of thousands of years of sin.

In Cain's time there was no command not to marry a sister. This command came thousands of years later and Cain cannot be held responsible for a law that was not in effect at his time.

At the time of the giving of the Law and the Old Covenant to Israel incest is clearly denounced (Leviticus 18:6, 20:17; Deuteronomy 27:22).