# Understanding and Answering Atheist Arguments

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# Understanding and Answering Atheism

Atheism presents itself as intellectually superior, but once we get past the façade we soon find that it is little more than clouds of wind with no rain[1]. What the apostles of atheism lack in substance they more than make up for with bold assertions and great swelling words. It is interesting how much easier it is to deceive people with a lie than to persuade them of the truth. I believe it is because deception draws from human nature where truth challenges both sin and human nature. Truth calls for us to put away what is false including pride, immaturity and our ego. People desire to be puffed up by knowledge and this leads to the desire of searching for secret revelations rather than the plainly stated truth. The truth does not appear as something exciting on the surface for it is plainly laid out whereas deception pretends to offer secret insights into something hidden and feeds the human ego by claiming to accomplish something through enlightenment. The promise of secret knowledge has always appealed to men more than plainly stated truth.

An example of this can be seen through the account of Naaman the Syrian who came to Elisha to be healed of leprosy[2]. Elisha sent word to him stating to just go to wash in the Jordan River. Naaman complained that he expected Elisha to wave his hand over the place and call on God for a miracle, but he was greatly disappointed because of the simplicity of the instruction given and left in a rage. His servants came to him and asked, “If the prophet had instructed you to do something great, wouldn’t you have done it? Why not obey the command to wash and be made clean?” This is human nature interfering with the truth. We want so much to see sensationalized truth that we are blinded to the plain simplicity of truth.

Generally speaking, I have found that apologetics do little to persuade those who are opposed to the gospel to turn to the truth. It is not possible to argue someone into the kingdom; therefore, the purpose of this section is to be a tool for believers whose faith is constantly challenged by those who are attempting to overthrow the confidence of the Christian. Christians are frequently being challenged by questions raised by atheists and critics of the Bible, but in the last few years the attacks have become almost overwhelming. As the culture has shifted, the critics of the Bible have become emboldened and it is now stylish to criticize God and mock the scriptures. It is important for Christians to know how

to deal with objections so they can have confidence in the face of opposition. Do not look at evidence as cannon fodder to blast at the opposition, but view evidence in light of **1 Peter 3:**

> 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

The answer comes from a heart that has first been sanctified (or dedicated) to God. There are many, many apologists that can defend denominational doctrines and argue against critics, yet they often know little about what it means to walk in fellowship with our God. In this passage the word 'answer' is the word 'apologia' which is where we get the word apologetics. Be cautious with this topic for it is easy to get loaded with information and get into a debate mode, but I have yet to find anyone who came to Christ through losing a debate. Several years back, apologetics was the most important thing in my life and it was the focus of my studies; however, my focus changed once I realized that I saw no fruit from 'proving' my position. What I found is that both sides remain firmly entrenched and all the information in the world does not seem to change the mind of the debater. The scripture tells us that it is the foolishness of the preached gospel that saves those who believe; therefore, we must look to the gospel as the heart of our mission.

When someone raises a question that they believe challenges the scripture, we must be ready to give an answer so that someone who is honestly questioning may see that we have a reason for our hope and we use the information that answers the objection as an open door to share the gospel. We also must share the truth with other Christians so that they can be assured that they indeed stand upon truth. If someone is in rejection of the truth, debating will not force-feed the gospel. Consider **Titus 3:10-11**

> 10 A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject;
> 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

The word 'heretic' means someone who follows false teachings. Simply put, this passage is instructing us not to argue endlessly to try to force someone to acknowledge the truth. If someone remains divisive and refuses to look at the evidence or acknowledge what is being said, discontinue the discussion knowing that that person will never acknowledge the truth. Romans 1 tells us that those

who refuse the truth are willfully ignorant. There are those who do not understand because they do not know the truth and there are those who do not understand because they refuse to acknowledge the truth. If an atheist acknowledges that God exists, then they also must acknowledge that He has a right to establish a moral law for man. At its heart, atheism is a battle for who will dictate moral ethics in our individual lives. If God exists, then we are subject to Him and are accountable to Him.

One thing I have discovered over the years is that many Christians fear the evidence because they are afraid that their faith will be disproven. Our faith is a shield, given by God, that defends us, but many try to defend their shield of faith. Rather than faith protecting us, we are trying to protect our faith. Many atheists quote Mark Twain who said, “Faith is believing what you know isn’t true”. This may apply to superstition, but it is not accurate for faith. Unfortunately many do in fact stand upon superstition rather than faith. These are the ones who will never find true victory and are in danger of falling. I have met Christians that clearly have doubts and rather than trying to answer those doubts, they suppress them and pretend that they don’t exist. They are afraid that the answers may lead them away from faith; however, I believe that all answers (if allowed to be fully explored) lead to the truth. There are many ex-evangelical preachers and former so-called Christians that grew tired of pretending and when they finally gave in to their doubts, they sought answers only from atheism. This is unfortunate for when that same evidence is examined fully, we find that atheism is shored up by assumptions and the exclusion of evidence.

Partial information can be very misleading. In a recent exoneration project, Texas death row inmates were given DNA tests and well over than half were exonerated by DNA even though they were convicted by the evidence on hand. In dozens of cases, twelve jurors looked at the evidence and came to the reasonable conclusion that these men were guilty when in fact they were innocent. Based on the partial evidence presented they drew a reasonable conclusion, but when the missing pieces were added it was indisputable that the conclusion of twelve men and women were wrong. The same holds true for evidence in any arena. When someone becomes an atheist, their testimonies indicate that they grew tired of ‘make believing’ and then turned to atheism for answers. In reality we should look at the whole truth and let the whole truth speak for itself. Ultimately all evidence testifies to the glory of God. The only time this fails is when certain portions of evidence have been filtered so that people draw false conclusions from the lack of information. Telling a half-truth

is misleading and is no different than a lie.

## *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*[3]

It is interesting how many people who claim to be Christians respond so negatively when creation is discussed. Since evolution is one of the primary focuses of atheism, this topic will be addressed in this section of study. If you are one of those who think that creation is an embarrassment to Christianity, you will likely be offended by the discussions that follow. Knowing that so many are offended at the doctrine of creation, it is necessary to explain the purpose of addressing this topic up front. Many Christians argue that they believe all but the first chapter of Genesis. Some hold to all but the first three chapters of Genesis. Some have argued various portions of the Bible that they discredit but hold to others. The question we must ask is, "Why is chapter two inspired, or chapter three, or any other starting point?" Once we begin applying selective faith, we lose confidence in all. It is unfortunate that atheism seems to understand the battle for truth better than the church. Consider the following quote:

> "Christianity has fought, still fights, and will continue to fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing." G. Richard Bozarth, 'The Meaning of Evolution', American Atheist 20 September, 1979, p. 30.

While the assumption Bozath stands upon is wrong, it is accurate to state that if Genesis is compromised, the whole authority of scripture is also compromised. The cross of Jesus nullified by those who deny that death came by sin and sin by the man Adam. If we do not believe that we inherit sin through human nature originating from Adam, we have completely undermined the gospel. Look at **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

> 21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.
>
> 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Bible teaches that just as all mankind passed through Adam and entered the curse of sin, all man must pass through Jesus Christ to be made alive and freed from the curse of sin. When Jesus answered the Pharisees question about divorce, Jesus pointed back to Adam and Eve to show that God established

marriage from the beginning and once a man and a woman become one flesh, God does not make a provision for divorcing and remarrying to fulfill our own desires. Jesus pointed back to Adam to validate the laws of God; the epistles point back to Adam to validate the message of the cross and our redemption; therefore, if we remove that truth from Christianity, we have collapsed the foundation of our faith and denied the works of Christ.

People craft many arguments in an attempt to get around this issue, but the fact remains that the entire New Testament points back to Genesis as the foundation of how we understand redemption in Christ. The heart of the matter is that there is a desire to please men by putting one foot into the world while attempting to keep the other foot in the gospel. Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. He also warned that the world will hate those who hold to the truth[4] and warned that if the world praises us, we are in the same class as the false prophets who gain the praise of men[5]. The truth is that people are intimidated by mockery and 'Theistic Evolution' was born out of a desire to marry the world to the scriptures. Just as we are commanded not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, the scripture cannot be yoked to atheistic doctrines.

Do not be offended because I place evolution in the same class as atheism, for evolution is a doctrine of atheism. In fact, evolution is the foundation built by atheists and is the foundation atheism is built upon. Church people who hold to evolution get angry when a connection is made to atheism because they are not atheists. While it may be true that many who believe in evolution are not atheists, it is undeniable that evolution is the doctrine of atheism. Atheists of the past have made no secret of the fact that evolution is the avenue by which they seek to find an explanation to our origins without a need for God. By design, evolution theory was constructed for the purpose of excluding God from view and the fruit of this doctrine speaks for itself. I have yet to meet a Christian who was persuaded to turn to Christ because of the teachings of evolution. Compare this to the testimonies of thousands who turned from Christianity once they bought into the teachings of evolution. Jesus stated that you will know teaching and teachers by their fruits.

Let's ask a simple question, "Why would God choose to reveal the truth of origins through atheism rather than raising up teachers from within the church?" Do you as a Christian believe that God chose to reveal truth through Charles

Darwin who turned from the faith he was brought up in and openly declared his disbelief in God? The fact is that most Christians who hold to evolution have a desire to be called intellectual by the world while claiming to be believers in the Bible in their churches. Truth plus error equals error. The atheist understands the battle ground of this world view and it is time that the church understand it as well. As this doctrine is taught to successive generations, each generation abandons the faith in greater numbers. If you allow the youth to be taught evolution on any level without being challenged, you are turning their hearts away from God. Truly there is nothing new under the sun and the events of the Old Testament are being played out in the church of today. Look at **1 Kings 18:**

> 21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Baal was a false god that the people had turned to. They tried to marry false teachings with the word of God but the Lord declared that the nation was given to idolatry. Once truth was mixed with error, it was all error. You face the same challenge from the word of God in this generation. Why do you hold between two opinions? If you believe the word of the Lord, follow Him wholly, if not, you are following Baal whether you realize it or not. I cannot tell you the number of times I have been called an embarrassment to Christianity by church people who hold to evolution. If you are persuaded to stand upon the word, you can expect this reaction as well.

Richard Dawkins is considered one of the foremost advocates of atheism and is often called the world's leading atheist and evolutionist. In this section I will quote heavily from Dawkins. Many years ago when I struggled with doubt I approached an atheist group and asked the question, "If you could identify something that absolutely refuted Christianity, what would it be?" As you can imagine, there was no shortage of answers. Most were easily answered for they were misunderstandings of scripture, but there were a handful of questions that appeared to challenge the Bible. I spent several weeks researching the difficult questions and I found that each one was proven in favor of the scripture. This gave me great confidence for if the greatest objections fell short, I could give the scriptures the benefit of the doubt on the rest. It is impossible to answer every question for atheists love to use what I call 'machinegun style argumentation'. Rather than exploring one topic to its conclusion, an atheist will ignore the answer and fire off a new question as the Christian attempts to answer. Either that or they will provide an exhaustive list of questions that would take an

infinite amount of time to answer. The fact is that if the hardest objections can be answered, the rest has little impact. Don't get caught up on every petty objection.

It is for this reason that I am using Dawkins as the focus of this study. Since he is the leading apologist for evolution and is the spokesman for this movement, it stands to reason that if his evidence can be answered, the plethora of voices competing for the limelight can be assumed to be echoing similar objections. Most atheists echo what they read from other atheists so most are redundant arguments or the rewording of similar objections. Richard Dawkins' book, 'The God Delusion' was written with the intention of converting Christians to atheism. This book is introduced with the challenge to Christians to have the courage to read this book and write any rebuttal to its claims. Dawkins plainly states that his goal is for Christians to pick this book up and put it down as an atheist.

At the beginning of 'The God Delusion', Dawkins interjects some of the showers of praise that proclaim him as the leading atheist / evolutionist of our time and goes on to claim, "If you want an understanding of evolution or an argument for atheism, there are few better guides than Richard Dawkins". For this reason I have read this book and plan to compile the main arguments into a study that the Christian can read to see through the smoke and mirrors that are used to disguise the lack of evidence from view. I found this book to be very inspirational, but not in the way Dawkins intended. If the world's greatest atheist presents such poorly reasoned arguments against the God of the Bible and the atheist community claims that this is the best articulated argument for atheism, the Christian should be filled with confidence that truth remains firm in spite of the onslaught of attacks.

Rather than cowering in fear while atheist boast at themselves and mock the scriptures, the Christian should be equipped to stand firm knowing that if this is the best atheism has to offer, we have little to fear. Once these objections are answered, we need not concern ourselves with chasing the endless supply of rabbits that atheism casts out in an effort to distract from the truth. Atheism attempts to overthrow our confidence by repeating an endless mantra that serves no other purpose than to indoctrinate through repetitiously preaching assumptions rather than presenting true evidence.

## *The House of Cards*

Intimidation is a powerful strategy to bring others into submission. False teachers in religious circles use strategies of intimidation but this applies equally for false teaching in what is labeled as non-religious. Bluffing is an attempt to intimidate an opponent into backing down by pretending to have abilities or tools that someone does not possess. Christians are very easily bluffed partly because of apathy. A Christian who is not a good student of the scriptures will back away when supposed contradictions are tossed about. Many atheist arguments fall quickly onto shaky ground when a bluff is called. Most atheist know little about their position other than the canned responses they pick up from books and atheist websites. When the information is challenged, they will attempt to bluff, but if challenged with facts their argument quickly begins to totter. Don't be surprised when an atheist quickly falls back to their last defensive stand which is mockery and name calling.

Atheism sets arbitrary rules for the engagement of ideas that have no reason other than an attempt to disqualify relevant information that cannot be refuted. In 'The God Delusion', Dawkins makes the claim that if evidence were to be discovered that contradicted evolution, he would change his position. This is a smokescreen for he also makes it clear that creation evidence doesn't qualify for debate because it is religious in nature and he is only concerned with science. Consider this quote from Dawkins:

> Even accepting the most pessimistic estimate of the probability that life might spontaneously originate, this statistical argument completely demolishes any suggestion that we should postulate design to fill the gap.

By design he is referring to the design of a Creator. Dawkins praises a speech where Nicholas Humphrey declared that freedom of speech must be protected in every circumstance but one – teaching religious ideas to the next generation. Dawkins then goes on to argue that parents should not have the right to teach faith to their children or teach them the 'straight and narrow path'. In 'The God Delusion' Dawkins then goes on to provide the following quote:

> [C]hildren have a right not to have their minds addled by nonsense, and we as a society have a duty to protect them from it. So we should no more allow parents to teach their children to believe, for example, in the literal truth of the Bible or that the planets rule their lives, than we should allow parents to knock their children's teeth out or lock them in a dungeon[6].

This is why creation will never be allowed to enter into the equation. Atheists are so opposed to the idea of design because they consider allowing children to be taught the truth of the Bible to be just as repulsive as physical abuse and torture. In their war on God, atheism has declared as its mission and duty to influence society to not allow the Christian faith to be taught to the next generation.

The goal of the atheistic argument is to persuade you not to even suggest that the gaps in evolution could be from a designer or Creator. We will discuss the statistical argument in detail later for it is one of the tottering foundations that evolution is built upon. Like a jury missing the key evidence needed to make a correct verdict, the atheist has placed himself as judge to strike down any evidence that will lead the jury of free thought to any other verdict than what has already been determined to be appropriate according to atheistic doctrine. Any evidence that points to a Creator is struck down as religious and not admissible to be examined in the trial of science.

Not only is vital evidence disallowed from examination, but fabricated evidence is introduced as the key evidence that drives the jury to the planned conclusion. Assumptions are the key evidence that backs up evolution and atheism as we shall see from Dawkins' own testimony. What is lacking in the world of evidence is made up for in bold assertions and blatant assumptions. The assumptions are veiled through well crafted arguments that are easily exposed if the Christian asks one question, "Why is that so?" The answer to this question will be met with a bluff, mockery or other intimidations, but you must insist on this to be answer truthfully and not accept an answer based on assumption and not fact. The scripture instructs us to first be grounded in the word so that we are not deceived. Look at **Ephesians 4:**

> 14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

The trap of deception is laid, but through solid doctrine we stand firm on a sure foundation. The beliefs of atheism are indeed doctrines for they teach specific principles although these principles are erroneous. The doctrines of atheism are established through cunning craftiness which give the appearance of wisdom but in reality it uses assumptions to force a conclusion that is actually contrary to the evidence. Set your heart to ask why. When the well crafted argument demands

you conclude what is being forced, analyze the argument and learn how to identify the difference between assumptions and evidence.

Several years ago our family took a vacation and during our drive we stopped by a travel information office to pick up some brochures. While there we were told that a new resort had opened in the area we were travelling to and that we could stay there for a discounted rate. The price was less than half of the cost of the hotel we were planning to stay at and it was a five star resort. All we had to do is take a tour of the property and help them spread the word about the resort. What a deal! It was not until we arrived and went into the conference room that I realized that this was bait for a timeshare presentation.

For the next ninety minutes a high pressure salesman did everything he could do to manipulate me into buying a timeshare. They misrepresented the facts, attempted to intimidate, mock, and try to make me feel stupid for passing up on such a ‘bargain’. Compared to how much we spent on vacation, the cost of making this purchase was astronomical; however, they kept presenting the numbers to make it look like it was so cheap that a fool would buy it. He took actual facts but presented them in such a way that they appeared to be saying something that was completely false. According to the way the salesman presented the numbers I was saving so much money that my cost appeared to be zero. It was a no-brainer. He kept demanding to know why I wouldn’t buy.

Soon the salesman brought in other sales reps to show me how I was missing the point and the pressure was turned up. Eventually they started mocking the idea that this deal was to be questioned. Soon they took the strategy of trying to pressure my wife into criticizing my resistance, and doing everything they could to show that only an idiot would not accept the deal. Afterward I was curious to see what the real cost would be for someone who caved in and not surprisingly I discovered that when I looked at the facts without someone to misrepresent it, the cost was absurd.

The doctrines of atheism use this exact same tactic. Atheism uses intimidation, scare tactics, mockery, and even turns colleagues against each other in order to force conformity. Every argument is crafted into such a way as to convince you that only the ignorant will not conform to the accepted outcome and mockery is to those who dare to question the assumptions of atheisms doctrines. Like the high pressure salesman who does not allow the potential buyer to examine the evidence without being guided, atheism rages against anyone who looks at

evidence without applying their assumptions that guide us to their conclusion. The irony of 'The God Delusion' is that the whole book forces a set way of thinking and then concludes by saying that atheist who follow the prescribed conclusions are freethinkers and those who will not conform are not. These tactics are effective for few openly question atheistic doctrine and many Christians have been persuaded to turn on their brethren.

This is written for the Christian but I hope it will serve in evangelism as well. Keep in mind that the Lord must open our eyes and He also must draw those who are contrary to His will. Pride is the root of atheism and those whose goal is to puff up their egos with selfworth cannot see the truth of God. **James 4:6** states the following:

> …He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Those whose lives are built upon pride cannot find grace. God may humble the proud and then reveal Himself to them, but do not be surprised by the blindness of those whose foundation is pride. In his book, Richard Dawkins favorably quotes one of his followers which explains the heart of the problem:

> 'You and I, of course, are much too intelligent and well educated to need religion. But ordinary people, hoi polloi, the Orwellian proles, the Huxleian Deltas and Epsilon semi-morons, need religion.'

Atheism is a religion of self-worship. It is faith in pride. For this reason it is very difficult for atheists to see the truth and the scripture warns that the pride of man is the greatest hindrance to man's ability to hear God's call. Grace is not revealed to those worshipping their pride for pride is a rebellion against the work of God. Even so, it is God's responsibility to deal with man's pride; it is our responsibility to proclaim the word of God.

## Arguments Built upon Assumptions

Atheism stands like a house of cards that's foundation is dependent upon assumptions. It is not the facts of science that are in dispute, but how the facts are viewed and what is allowed to be admitted as evidence. While atheists dismiss any evidence that points to the God who created us, they also introduce assumptions as the missing evidence that is needed to uphold their worldview. If the assumptions are removed, the foundation collapses and the house of cards will fall. The job of the atheist apologist is to protect the foundation by

distracting attention away from it. In order to make something sound credible, evolution must create an impression of simplicity.

An example of implied simplicity can be seen in an earlier article by Richard Dawkins entitled, ‘Where’d You get those Peepers’. One of the great mysteries of science is the amazing complexity of they eye and due to the supposed evolutionary trees promoted by evolutionists, the eye would have to have evolved at least 40 times independently from each other. Aside from the engineering mastery of the eye, the true miracle is the light sensitive cell. The Human eye has two extremely complex light sensitive cells called rods and cones. Rods are more sensitive to light but cannot discern color but cones are receptive to both light and detect color. To go from non-light sensitive to light sensitive is an enormous transition and it proposes a great challenge to evolution; however, atheists gloss over this challenge as they fight to persuade others of the simplicity of the evolutionary process.

In the article, ‘Where’d You get those Peepers’, Dawkins presented a scientific computer model introduced by Nilsson and Pelger which supposedly proved that the eye could have easily evolved forty times. Dawkins acknowledges that no attempt was made to explain the evolution of the light sensitive cell by stating, “you have to start somewhere, and Nilsson and Pelger started after the invention of the photocell”. This is a necessary strategy for in order to keep the evolutionary model simple, complex components must already be present so that the Nilsson / Pelger model could show the easy assembly of the parts.

The Dawkins argument goes on to say that “Nilsson and Pelger made no attempts to simulate the inner workings of cells” and, “They worked at the level of tissues…rather than the level of individual cells”. The computer simulation does no more than create a visual display that gives the impression that the road to evolution was a simple, logical process that doesn’t need to be concern with the inner workings of cells, addition of new DNA information or any of the other complexities that reveal the impossibility of evolution.

Even more interesting is the claim that evolution is proven by not allowing it to fail. Dawkins states, “They then let the model deform itself at random, constrained only by the requirement that any change must be small and must be an improvement on what went before.” The ‘proof’ of the evolutionary worldview is dependent on the assumption that evolution cannot allow mutations that are not an improvement on what is already in place. Evolution depends on

the assumption that new data is being added to the DNA code and that this information is only beneficial. If this assumption is false, then the entire Nilsson and Pelger model is false for it acknowledges that it is based on this assumption. This assumption is refuted by the pro-evolution publication put out by Atomic Scientists. While discussing the effects of genetic mutations, Atomic Scientists explains:

> "It is entirely in line with the accidental nature of mutations that extensive tests have agreed in showing the vast majority of them detrimental to the organism in its job of surviving and reproducing -- good ones are so rare we can consider them all bad." (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 11:331)

So while Dawkins states that the model of Nilsson and Pelger proves that the eye could have evolved forty times by 'not allowing' negative mutations, pro-evolution researchers acknowledge that negative mutations are so prevalent that it is safe to assume that all mutations are detrimental to the organism. For this reason, the logic Dawkins builds his argument upon collapses by simply removing the false assumption that sustains the Nilsson and Pelger model.

In 'The God Delusion', each of Dawkins arguments are built on assumptions and therefore are on shaky ground. Mockery and boastful claims of superior intelligence are decoys that turn the attention away from the assumption in order to prevent the collapse of each evolutionary argument. Dawkins uses many decoys to send theologians on a wild goose chase so that they are too busy to analyze the root of the problem. He then quotes absurd arguments presented by selected theologians that have been drawn into the decoy arguments. We will look at some of the arguments atheism presents against God later, but for now I want to focus on the importance of identifying assumptions.

## *Recognizing Assumptions*

When we honestly look at how Christians respond to criticism against faith, we see that the problem is that most Christians are intimidated by the bold assertions of atheists or sidetracked by decoy arguments. The goal of the atheistic argument is to set the rules of engagement and persuade the Christian to get into their arena with their hands tied. When an atheist proclaims that an assumption is true or limits the discussion to only what they can defend, the Christian should challenge the limitations and question the introduction of unfounded assumptions. For some reason we are allowing the atheist to determine what is admissible as evidence, what can be discussed, and what will be dismissed from the discussion. When an atheist declares something as true, we must learn to ask why. What you will find is that most atheists are only comfortable while they are in control of the rules of engagement. When their protection from facts are removed, they either withdraw or become enraged. Their reaction is not our concern; our concern is the pursuit of truth.

Another reason Christians are easily intimidated is because they are afraid that God may be proven false. It is not our job to protect God and try to keep faith separated from the facts of the world around us. All truth, if allowed to be explored fully, will point to our Creator for He created all things and all things point to His glory. Consider the testimony of creation from **Psalm 19:1-3**

> 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
> 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
> 3 *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

In the hands of a con man, evidence can be presented in a way as to draw a false conclusion. To remove contradictory evidence is a powerful way to persuade someone to draw a false conclusion. How much more is that true when you conjure up false evidence to present as truth in order to persuade. Both of these strategies are the powers behind the arguments of atheism; they disallow contradictory evidence and introduce assumptions based on sheer conjecture. Let’s look at the examples given through the testimony of the ‘world’s leading evolutionist’, Richard Dawkins.

## The Anthropic Principle

The anthropic principle is the source of luck needed to get past the impossible hurdles that hinder evolution and it is the core foundation that many evolution arguments are built upon as Dawkins will explain. There are volumes of books written on the anthropic principle but I will allow Richard Dawkins to provide a brief summary. The anthropic principle is based on the assumption that if the numbers are high enough, anything is possible. Dawkins explains:

> [T]he anthropic alternative to the design hypothesis is statistical. **Scientists invoke the magic of large numbers**. It has been estimated that there are between 1 billion and 30 billion planets in our galaxy, and about 100 billion galaxies in the universe. Knocking a few noughts off for reasons of ordinary prudence, a billion billion is a conservative estimate of the number of available planets in the universe. Now, suppose the origin of life, the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA, really was a quite staggeringly improbable event. Suppose it was so improbable as to occur on only one in a billion planets. …And yet…even with such absurdly long odds**, life will still have arisen on a billion planets** – of which Earth, of course, is one. This conclusion is so surprising, I'll say it again. **If the odds of life originating spontaneously on a planet were a billion to one against, nevertheless that stupefyingly improbable event would still happen on a billion planets.** The chance of finding any one of those billion life-bearing planets recalls the proverbial needle in a haystack. **But we don't have to go out of our way to find a needle because (back to the anthropic principle) any beings capable of looking must necessarily be sitting on one of those prodigiously rare needles before they even start the search.** (God Delusion, Emphasis added)

What if the evidence shows something to be impossible? Will giving something a billion to one odds make the impossible become probable? No, if something contradicts reality, giving it infinitely more chances will not improve a zero percent chance. A billion, billion times zero is still zero. The anthropic principle is circular reasoning hidden behind large, statistical numbers. The idea is that since we are living on a planet where life has arisen, we know that it has happened. Based on this assumption, we can apply statistics to a billion, billion earth like planets and supposedly 'prove' that even if it occurs in one out of a billion planets, life would still arise a billion times. Since the anthropic principle shows that it happened a billion times, it bypasses the need to know how life arises against what seems to be impossible odds. The testimony of Klaus Dose explains why atheism saw the need to create the anthropic principle:

> More than 30 years of experimentation on the origin of life in the fields of chemical and molecular evolution have led to a better perception of the immensity of the problem of the origin of life on earth rather than to its solution. At present all discussions on principal theories and experiments in the field either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance." [From Interdisciplinary Science Review 13(1988):348-56.]

The first organism has proven to be a problem for evolution and as Dawkins admits, it is a ‘stupefyingly and staggeringly improbable event’. Consider the simplest form of life. The simplest single celled organism has over 500 different amino acids necessary for life. Evolutionists will quickly point out that there are cells that have as few as 15; however, these are dependent cells in a larger organism. Let’s take a moment to explain the problem of the formation of amino acids. The natural process of oxidation breaks down amino acids. If left to itself, breakdown and formation is a continuous process. If accidental life were possible, it still could not form the necessary amount of amino acids due to the problem of oxidation. This problem is compounded by the discovery explained by Robert Orion in Science magazine:

> [M]ost nucleotides degrade rather fast at the temperatures scientists conclude existed on the early earth according to Robert Irion. (Ocean Scientists Find Life, Warmth in the Seas, *Science* **279**:1302–1303, 1998)

The desperation of evolution has supposedly solved this problem by imagining an environment free of oxygen where the amino acids would form with the right types and right quantities in order to form the cell structure. It is commonly taught that electricity was the catalyst for sparking the life form (probably through a storm) and then instantly oxygen appeared on the scene. Where it came from is unknown or why it was conveniently missing is unknown. Like magic, the amazingly complex cell was assembled by amino acids forming into proteins with the necessary functionality to breathe oxygen, consume a food source, digest that food and distribute it to the cell while also having the capacity to process and extract the waste material that is always left after the cell has used the sugars from the food source. It also formed with the capability to divide into two fully functional cells and split its DNA into two perfect copies without losing even a single rung of the billions of strands of coded DNA (or copied its RNA depending on which account you read). This is quite a creation....err formation. If one single failure occurred, millions of years of chance would have been lost and since oxygen is now present, future chances would be hopeless. Just think what would happen if the cell wall broke during division? All would

be lost.

Now, what to eat? Since it was the first life form and all food comes from organic material, what would an organism eat while waiting for evolution to provide a sustainable eco system? Perhaps the anthropic principle will give evolution a free pass on a sustainable food source without organic material in a world that has nothing growing or living. The problem of impossibility is glossed over by assumptions. Dawkins explains again:

> We can deal with the unique origin of life by postulating a very large number of planetary opportunities. Once that initial **stroke of luck has been granted** – and the anthropic principle most decisively grants it to us – natural selection takes over: and natural selection is emphatically not a matter of luck. (Dawkins, The God Delusion)

The stroke of luck is the faith evolution is built upon for it is the assumption that everything hinges upon. Whether the assumption is labeled as 'postulating', assuming, or any other term, it is still an assumption. Science has to hypothesize in order to explore science. In true science, the researcher looks at the evidence, hypothesizes a possible explanation, and then uses experimentation, other evidence and hard research to test the hypothesis to prove or disprove aspects of the theory. How do you put 'blind luck' to scientific scrutiny? Is blind luck a reasonable answer to explain how the impossible appears to have 'just happened'? Without assumptions, doctrines based on atheism cannot be sustained. Dawkins again explains:

> Any probability statement is made in the context of a certain level of ignorance. If we know nothing about a planet, we may **postulate** the odds of life's arising on it as, say, one in a billion. But if we **now import some new assumptions into our estimate, things change**. … But my earlier calculation demonstrated that even a chemical model with odds of success as low as one in a billion would still predict that life would arise on a billion planets in the universe. And the beauty of the anthropic principle is that it tells us, **against all intuition**, that a chemical model need only predict that life will arise on one planet in a billion billion to give us a good and **entirely satisfying explanation for the presence of life** here. (Dawkins, The God Delusion, Emphasis added)

In this statement, Dawkins has presented a classic evolutionist tactic. Earlier in his book he presented what he acknowledged as an assumption and now he is pointing back to his previous assumption as evidence to support a new

assumption. Only now he calls his previous assumption ‘demonstrated proof’. As you move forward in evolutionary arguments you will find that one man’s assumption ‘evolves’ into another man’s proof. In this example Dawkins has bypassed the normal evolution of thought by using his own assumptions and has transformed them into hard evidence. Perhaps it is the anthropic principle that allows him to bypass the ‘natural selection’ of ideas. I will give another example of this shortly.

He has affirmed the words of Klaus Dose above by falling back on ignorance as a means of escaping the question while at the same time declaring evolution to be proven true based on assumptions alone. He is openly admitting that the facts paint a different picture and that evolution is calling us to go ‘against all intuition’; however, if you accept ‘the assumption that is interjected, things change’. The assumption, according to Dawkins, fills in the gap of impossibility and gives an entirely satisfying explanation. I hope that you as the reader can see that the satisfaction is not coming from any semblance of evidence, but a blind assumption that is built purely upon blind luck. Evolutionists are entirely satisfied with their own postulations without any evidence to back up their musings. The anthropic principle is the ‘lucky rabbit’s foot’ of evolution and has become the object of their faith. Evolution has to employ a lot of blind faith for the origin of life is nothing compared to the other astronomical problems of evolution. The gap between simpler life forms such as bacteria and more complex cells in mammals are such an evolutionary jump that the probability is far harder to overcome than the origin of life. Dawkins explains:

> [T]he origin of life is not the only major gap in the evolutionary story that is bridged by sheer luck, anthropically justified. For example, my colleague Mark Ridley in … The Cooperative Gene has suggested that the origin of the eucaryotic cell (our kind of cell, with a nucleus and various other complicated features such as **mitochondria**, which are not present in bacteria) was an **even more momentous**, difficult and statistically improbable step than the origin of life.

The anthropic principle is used to explain all problems in evolution as though it were the missing link discovered by science rather than the imaginations of those needing to justify their assumptions. Dawkins also explains that the three biggest problems for evolution are the formation of life, crossing the gap from simple cells to the eukaryotic cell, and crossing of the mind into consciousness. Dawkins rightly explains that these events are not normal biological adaptations for the processes do not exist everywhere (which is quite an understatement).

The catalyst atheists use to bypass all of these problems is the almighty anthropic principle as Dawkins explains:

> The anthropic principle states that, since we are alive, eucaryotic and conscious, our planet has to be one of the intensely rare planets that has bridged all three gaps.

This is circular reasoning at its finest. Since we are here, these assumptions must be true. Since these assumptions must be true, it must explain why we are here. Why are Christians so intimidated by the claims of atheism? Theistic evolution, the gap theory, and other compromises are formed out of the fear of atheism. This is not new to our time for the apostle Paul addressed this in

**1 Timothy 6:20-21b**

> 20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:
> 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

In this day many have strayed from the faith because of the vain babblings that masquerade as science. The word babbling is not intended to be a derogatory statement; it means 'empty discussions' or discussions that have no real substance. It is called science (or systematic knowledge), but when we look beyond the empty arguments we see that it has no merit. We are not being intimidated by true knowledge, but are being bluffed by a well crafted, deceitful argument that masquerades as truth. I read an article from someone who was a preacher that quoted from 'The God Delusion' and used it as evidence to question the Old Testament. It should be easy to see through the empty discussions, but unfortunately most do not. This is the reason this study is necessary. Christians should have the ability to look beyond the assertions and identify the assumptions. There are so many examples of assumptions that Dawkins presents as 'proofs' that it would be tedious to recite them all, but I will cite one more example because it shows that atheism acknowledges the problem evolution places on physics as well as biology:

> **We can now safely say that the illusion of design** in living creatures is just that – an illusion. We don't yet have an equivalent crane for physics. Some kind of multiverse theory could in principle do for physics the same explanatory work as Darwinism does for biology. This kind of explanation is superficially less satisfying than the biological version of Darwinism, because it **makes heavier demands on luck**. But **the anthropic principle entitles us to postulate far more luck than our limited human intuition**

> **is comfortable with**. (Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion, Emphasis added)

Through the anthropic principle, Dawkins claims that they have safely proven that the appearance of design in our universe is an illusion, there is a multiverse (multiple universes coexisting in the same space in different realms), and evolution is given the blind luck necessary for physics as well as biology. Dawkins stated at the beginning of his book that his goal was to convert Christians into atheists. Sadly, the product is often far worse – Christians who merge doctrines of atheism into the Christian religion. I say the Christian religion because once someone claiming to be a Christian departs from their confidence in scripture, they are merely a religious practitioner and are no longer walking in true biblical faith. There is a false faith that bears no fruit, but true faith is by the Spirit and is grounded in the word of God. Without the word, there can be no true faith. Dawkins has faith in the anthropic principle so we can see that faith can be in anything, but true biblical faith is trusting God through His word.

## *Natural Selection*

As Christians we often confuse the evolution argument by pointing to time and chance for every criticism of evolution but time and chance are now introduced only when impossible odds need to be obscured. Most of evolution depends on natural selection. Part of the confusion is due to the changing face of evolution as they evolve their arguments into new claims as science disproves the old ideas. The evolutionary theory was born out of a desire to provide an explanation of the origin of life without a Creator. Since the goal is to distance themselves from God, disproving the argument will never change the mind of an atheist. Their primary goal is to remove God so when one argument fails, an alternative version is formed. Let me also clarify that many call themselves atheists because they have only been exposed to the crafty arguments of atheism and are not aware that the evidence contradicts the doctrines of atheism and agrees with the scriptures.

When I refer to atheism I am assuming that the reader understands that I am referring to those who are in rejection of the truth and will not be persuaded in the face of any evidence. Many will be open to the truth of scripture when they realize that they have been hoodwinked by the one-sided propaganda that is being passed off as reason and free thought.

We should have a basic understanding of natural selection so that we are not shaken when evolution presents the evidence along with deceptive arguments. Natural selection and micro-evolution are facts of science but do not in any way challenge the Bible – nor do they support evolution. The most popular example of natural selection from the Origin of the Species was the finches Charles Darwin studied on the Galápagos Islands. During seasons when food shortages were a problem, the finches with longer beaks were able to catch insects better by reaching deeper into tree bark or other areas where the food was available. The shorter beaked birds had a greater chance of starving and the longer beaked birds had a greater chance of surviving. Natural selection is the tendency of living organisms to survive because of an increased adaptability or traits that conform to the environment where they reside.

Dog breeding is an example of natural selection through intelligent intervention. When a breeder chooses a trait that is desirable, that dog is set apart for breeding and over time the offspring is weeded out to only allow the traits to remain that are desired in the breed. Even though many breeds descended from a common

parent, bulldogs will produce bulldogs, poodles will produce poodles, and so on. The reason a breed of dog will produce consistent results is because the breeder has weeded out many of the traits that are not desirable and the genetic code has lost that information. The changes are a loss of information, not the addition of new information. No breeder has successfully transitioned a dog into another species. In fact, over breeding is a serious problem that breeders try to avoid for too much loss of information causes what is known as ‘inbreeding depression’. This can cause genetic diseases and loss of reproduction. Inbreeding depression is a problem found in both animals and plants.

Another thing to note is that since all dogs are part of the same kind, cross breeding poses no problem. A poodle always produces a poodle because an offspring can only contain the traits present in its parent’s DNA. Since all dogs are the same kind, there is not a conflict when a poodle breeds with a bulldog. This is one reason why the same kind of animal in one region differs in appearance from the same kind in another region. When a kind is isolated from the common gene pool, they will only maintain the traits that are available in their isolated region. Races of people are from groups of people isolated from each other but when races mix, what happens? Over time, the distinctive look fades into a common ‘norm’.

In ‘The Origin of the Species’, Darwin makes the observation that if two breeds are mixed, the first generation of offspring will have a mixed appearance between the two breeds, but the next generation will produce a litter with no two dogs alike. This affirms the fact that when additional information is introduced into the gene pool, many of the lost traits are reintroduced and produce a variety of new looks and features. The following generations have the opportunity to produce a variety of appearances through the introduction of many traits that were previously weeded out of that breed. Darwin also acknowledges that when mongrels and hybrids are crossbred, although varieties will appear in successive generations the tendency to have many varieties will eventually graduate away[7]. This is to be expected as a species levels out to a common ‘norm’.

When a breeder attempts to breed one kind with another, problems are encountered. A mule is a mix between a donkey and a horse, but the offspring is a sterile animal. These two kinds are close enough in relation to allow one generation, but the ability to reproduce is lost. In most kinds, inbreeding is not even possible for the two genetic blueprints differ to the point where mixing is

not possible. Far from providing proof for evolution, these examples fit the scripture's claim that each species produces after its own kind. Breeding allows man to focus on desired traits, but does not provide a path to a new species or another kind. For more than half a century scientists have been trying to break the genetic limitations yet they have not done so. If evolutionists have not been able to produce a new species through human effort and the most technologically advanced equipment, this should bring into question the claim that natural selection will lead to new species (or kinds).

Darwin was an avid pigeon breeder and was involved in breeder clubs. He imported pigeons with various exaggerated traits. He acknowledges that all pigeons are descendents of the rock pigeon. This pigeon is the same pigeon that can be found in most city parks around the world. Through selective breeding for hundreds or even thousands of years, these pigeons from around the world had many drastic variations including fan tails, tumbler pigeons, large crops, etc. He observed changes in traits that he could alter by selective breeding and concluded that if he could make these changes within a few generations of pigeons, in time a new species of bird would develop. Through our knowledge of genetics we know that this assumption was incorrect. In some species, breeds may remain distinct, but they cannot ascend above their genetic code.

Unless there is isolation from a larger gene pool, a species will remain in the common norm. These changes in pigeons were due to human intervention as is the case with dog breeds. Even Darwin acknowledges that breeds from the same species that greatly differ do so because they are separated from the species in other parts of the world. According to Darwin, oceans, mountain ranges, and times of glacial changes separate species keeping them from interbreeding and thus having drastically different appearances. What Darwin could not see because of ignorance of genetics was that change was limited to the genetic traits already present in each species. If his theory were valid, his pigeons should have continued their ascent to becoming a new species; however, we now know this is not possible. Changes in separated but related species are the outward appearance of a loss of genetic information. Isolated groups have no ability to recover trait features that were lost due to varying conditions or the partial extinction of their siblings.

All breeds in all species have a point where the genetic barrier prevents further change. All breeds have a safe zone where traits can be pursued without health risks, but if taken beyond healthy barriers, genetic problems will occur. A fact of

genetics is that trait changes have a ceiling because there are only sixty-four possible combinations for each ‘word’ in the DNA code. One strand of Human DNA within each cell could stretch out 6 feet in length. It contains 3 billion pairs of DNA subsets and 46 chromosomes, and yet fits within one microscopic cell. Every living organism – both plants and animals – have the blueprint of every function of their body written in this code. DNA tells every cell in your body how to build its structure, manufacture proteins and carry out its functions necessary for life to exist.

If you took all the DNA in the human body and put it in written format, it would fill up one million volumes the size of a 500 page encyclopedia. With all this genetic data, if two people could have as many children as there are atoms in the universe, no two children would be identical. Though there are limitless combinations of traits that we possess, there is a limit to how far each trait can change. The combination of the four possible letters of the DNA code among billions of lines provides the opportunity of the variations we see. There is a limit to the number of combinations of these chemicals; therefore there are a limited number of trait variations. **No new genetic material can be added without creating confusion in the order of DNA which always results in a defect.**

DNA is a four-letter alphabet that can create a possible 64 ‘words’. Each rung of DNA is made up of four chemicals called nucleotides, designated by the symbols: A (adenine), G (guanine), C (cytosine), and T (thymine). These rungs of DNA are combined to provide a blueprint of the traits that organism will have. Every strand of the code is constructed like a micro-sentence. The ‘word’ is three letters long and has a code that tells the interpreting key to ‘begin here’ and ‘end here’. It is for this reason that, even though there are so many combinations of traits possible, there is also a limit to the changes that can occur. This is the barrier that ends the possibility of gradual change actually becoming a pathway toward a new species through the process of micro-evolution. Micro-evolution is the changes of a species by combining possible trait variations based on the information already available in the genetic code. Since each species has different blueprints, it is not possible to combine DNA from two unrelated plants or animals. Pollen from unrelated plants will not fertilize seeds from different species and sometimes cannot combine with distant relatives in the same species such as red and blue pimpernels. Unrelated species of animals cannot mate and those which are close enough to be crossed by man’s intervention cannot reproduce (such as the mule).

Trait changes are affected by the arrangement of the genetic code that is already present and received from parents. Mixing the available genetic code will produce variations in the trait but will not change into a completely different feature. For example, your parent's genes are combined to produce your various traits. People have several different colors of hair, eyes, and skin, but without a mutation, these traits will remain within their boundaries. There are mutations that can occur and mutations almost always cause diseases or defects. The only exception is when a child receives one defective recessive gene from one parent but a good gene from the other parent. Most functions can work with one good copy without a noticeable defect. If the defect is a dominant gene or if both parents have the same defect and pass it along to the child, the mutation will be present and will affect the child. Even when a mutation occurs, skin will still be skin and eyes will still be eyes. Because of the code barrier, there are a limited number of variations in eye color. Different genes can create distinct variations but there is a limit. There can be rapid changes but inevitably, there is a return to the norm.

In Darwin's day, the genetic code found in DNA was unknown. His only information was the outward changes that could be bred into various species, but he could not know how these changes occurred, nor could he know that each cell contained software that programmed each instinct, process, and trait for each species. Like a jury whose verdict is overturned when their assumption is proven false when missing information is found, Darwin's assumptions, though they seemed reasonable based on the information at hand, has been falsified by data discovered over the last century.

In many, many court cases, DNA evidence has exonerated those falsely convicted, yet there are times when officials refuse to accept the evidence and keep innocent people in prison. Why do DA's and the courts fight against correcting a wrong conviction? Sometimes there is a fear that it will reopen a case and force them to expend resources to try to solve the case with the truth, but more often than not it is pride. In the same way, DNA has overturned the verdict of Darwinism, yet those invested in pride refuse to accept any evidence that does not affirm what they want to be true. Many educators and scientists have invested their lives and reputations upon evolution and to acknowledge this as a mistake requires humility. Since atheism is built upon pride, it is not surprising that considering creation is not an option.

Genetic science has falsified the evolutionary view of natural selection which teaches that this process will lead to gradual changes that will eventually produce a new species. In reality, the longer beaked finches are still finches and there are no examples of one species becoming another species given any amount of time or any amount of natural selection. What the evolutionist views as a slow transition into a new species would actually require changes in the DNA code and the addition of new information. What natural selection actually accomplishes is the weeding out of information from the DNA code.

Let's take a final glance at the changes in the finches that seemed to stir Darwin's imagination. What he could not see is that when harsh conditions or competition from other species over food came into play, the survival of a species did not add to the possibility of future changes, but instead removed the ability of parents to produce offspring with traits from the lost genetic material. In the case of finches during Darwin's observation, the long beaked birds survived while the shorter beaks died off. When conditions changed on the Island, the shorter beaked birds began to reappear on the scene and the permanent elimination of short beaks was avoided. If the conditions that caused the shorter beaked birds to die were to continue, shorter beaked offspring would have also continued to die off and the shorter beak traits would have become more and more rare until it would eventually be lost altogether. If a population is isolated from a larger gene pool, the lost information could not be recovered. Over time, depending on conditions, a species in an isolated area could become dramatically different in appearance than the same species in another area. This is what we often see and it poses no problem for creation; however, genetics does pose a serious problem for Darwinian evolution.

Since many traits are recessive genes, their appearance may be unseen for many generations. A species may carry recessive genes indefinitely but the trait will not appear until the dominant gene is absent. An offspring gets two strands of DNA, half its DNA from each parent. If one strand of DNA contains a dominant gene and one a recessive gene for the same trait, the offspring will become a carrier of the recessive gene and will have a 50% chance of passing this to the next generation. If two parents carry the same recessive gene and both pass this on to their offspring, the recessive trait will appear. This is why rare traits can emerge in breeds after many generations. Darwin did not understand this fact of science and acknowledges that it confused him. When discussing the sudden 'reversion' he observed in his pigeons that he bred, Darwin made the following statement:

> [I]t is generally believed that a tendency to reversion is retained by this very small proportion of foreign blood. In a breed which has not been crossed, but in which BOTH parents have lost some character which their progenitor possessed, the tendency, whether strong or weak, to reproduce the lost character might be, as was formerly remarked, for all that we can see to the contrary, transmitted for almost any number of generations. When a character which has been lost in a breed, reappears after a great number of generations, the most probable hypothesis is, **not that the offspring suddenly takes after an ancestor** some hundred generations distant, but that in each successive generation there has been a tendency to reproduce the character in question, which at last, under **unknown favourable conditions**, gains an ascendancy. For instance, it is probable that in each generation of the barb-pigeon, which produces most rarely a blue and black-barred bird, there has been a tendency in each generation in the plumage to assume this colour. (Charles Darwin, Origin of the Species, Emphasis added)

Of course the tendency of reversion was not in the blood as Darwin alluded to, but in the genetic code stored in the DNA. Darwin said that he did not believe that the offspring took this trait after an ancestor, but he believed that there was a tendency for reversion back to the past. Through science, we know that the trait was indeed passed on from a distant ancestor and though the likelihood of continuing to carry the gene diminishes with each generation, it still is possible for some of the pigeons to pass on recessive genes. Darwin also stated that the tendency for lost traits reappearing was due to ‘unknown favorable conditions’. The Natural Selection hypothesis assumes many of these genetic appearances are due to conditions that activate something within the animal to revert back to a previous state. We now know that it is caused by a recessive gene that over time was reintroduced by two parents who contained the trait and did not pass on a dominant gene that suppresses these traits.

If conditions exist which make survival difficult or impossible for an offspring with this trait, the gene will become less common and in time it is likely that this information will be lost completely. If this occurs the trait will never again emerge in the species unless it is cross bred with a related breed. This is why dog breeds can have undesirable traits at random, but the breed continues to be distinct from other breeds. Darwin’s explanation of Natural Selection mistakenly assumes that the breed is ascending as explained in this example:

> Whatever the cause may be of each slight difference in the offspring from

> their parents--and a cause for each must exist--it is the **steady accumulation**, through natural selection, of such differences, when beneficial to the individual, that gives rise to all the more important modifications of structure, by which the innumerable beings on the face of this earth are enabled to struggle with each other, and the best adapted to survive. (Charles Darwin, Origin of the Species, Emphasis added)

So we can see that the flaw of the evolutionary view of Natural Selection is that it assumes that the species is ascending and accumulating new information, when in fact, the opposite is true. The offspring that die off due to changes in condition or competition over necessities are not gaining new traits, but losing the traits that hinder the species under that specific condition. The finches of Darwin's study already had the ability to produce long beaks and short beaks. Natural Selection did not give the bird a new trait, but merely weeded out those who had the incompatible traits with the conditions at hand.

The writings of Darwin sound credible as many hypotheses do, but the truth is that it does not match the facts. A credible sounding argument is not accounted for evidence. It must be measured against what is observed and if it contradicts, it is false regardless of how reasonable it may sound. It sounds reasonable to say that species are ascending by restructuring the organism for its benefit as it ascends to a higher species, but with the discovery of DNA and our understanding of genetics, what sounded reasonable in the past is now known to contradict the facts of what really occurs.

Natural selection is true in the sense that plants or animals with certain traits will survive over competitors given the right conditions, but it is not true that this adds information to DNA. Micro-evolution is limited changes that affect traits based on the information available in the genetic code already present. Macro-evolution is the assumption that these changes will add to the DNA and transform the creature into another species. Micro-evolution is a fact of science and is observable; macro-evolution has never been observed and is based solely upon old assumptions which have been disproven through our knowledge of genetics.

## *Evidences Presented to Disprove Christianity*

Atheists and other critics of Christianity have no shortage of claims against the Bible's reliability; therefore, we should be equipped to answer these objections. In this section we will be examining the things that are presented as the strongest evidences against Christianity. Let me stress again what was stated a bit earlier; the Christian should not get caught up in endless arguing against the never ending barrage of attacks, for if the strongest evidence comes to nothing, we should not be concerned with the tedious details that atheists will doubtless throw out as a last ditch effort to land a blow against biblical truth. The Bible instructs us not to get caught up in endless disputings over words and railings that come from the proud who seek to do nothing more than cause strife[8]. The scriptures also instruct us to avoid foolish questions that are unprofitable and vain[9]. Jesus instructed His disciples not to cast their pearls before swine for they will reject it and come back to trample you[10].

For the reasons above, I stress again that the purpose of this study is not to arm the Christian with fodder to blast at the atheist, but to be a tool to give the believer confidence that the attacks against God are nothing and to be used as an evangelistic tool. If we answer the objections of the critics of God and find that there is an open door to share the truth of salvation in Christ, these things are indeed profitable in a discussion; however, if we answer objections and find an atheist begins to entrench himself and launch into machinegun fire argumentation, obey the Bible's instruction and withdraw yourself knowing that he is proud, puffed up by his vain imagination and is self-condemning[11]. There are many who have adopted atheism simply because they have never heard anything that refutes it and may be open to the truth. There are others who are atheists because they are revolted by the thought of God ruling over them and will cling to anything that gives them hope that He does not exist.

With or without external evidence, the Christian stands firm if they stand upon the word by applying it to their own lives. Even with evidence to back every argument, if you are not standing in obedience to the word of God in your own life, you will have no sure foundation. Look at **Matthew 7:24-27**

> 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

> 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
> 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
> 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

We have all seen people in the church whose faith collapses when they are blindsided by the trials of life or attacks on their Christian beliefs. There are other examples of Christians who grew into a deep maturity with the Lord when they were blindsided by these same things. Based on our willingness to obey, this is either the strength or the weakness of the Christian life. Apologetics has its place, but it cannot replace knowing and walking in the word of God. If you are a hearer and doer of the word, you will stand. If you are not grounded deep in the rock of Christ through the word of God, every wind will shake you and a mighty storm will collapse your faith. This can come as a hardship, temptation, disappointment, or compelling sounding argument against your faith. When you truly know God and are walking with Him, there is nothing that can persuade you to turn from the God you know. Richard Dawkins quotes from a letter written by the president of a historical society in New Jersey to Albert Einstein when he denied his belief in a personal God:

> God is a spirit and cannot be found through the telescope or microscope, no more than human thought or emotion can be found by analyzing the brain. As everyone knows, religion is based on Faith, not knowledge. Every thinking person, perhaps, is assailed at times with religious doubt. My own faith has wavered many a time. But I never told anyone of my spiritual aberrations for two reasons: (1) I feared that I might, by mere suggestion, disturb and damage the life and hopes of some fellow being; (2) because I agree with the writer who said, ‘There is a mean streak in anyone who will destroy another’s faith.’ (Quoted from ‘The God Delusion’)

This letter is representative of the confusion found in many church members but does not agree with true biblical faith. Though everyone will have doubts of some kind during the course of their lives, I do not believe that hiding it benefits others and it surely does not benefit the individual who has doubts. The scripture instructs us to share our struggles with one another so that we can pray for one another[12], we are told to bear one another’s burdens in the church[13], and we

are told that when we struggle, our companions can pick us up, but woe to him that falls when he is alone[14].

I also do not agree that God cannot be seen through the telescope or microscope. The truth is that God cannot be found by those whose hearts are veiled by pride and human nature, but when you examine creation, it all declares the glory of God. By Richard Dawkins' own admission, a billion billion earth like planets are a conservative estimation and there are more than a billion galaxies believed to exist. Does not a billion galaxies testify to a Creator? The faith in a 'cosmic egg' is preposterous when you look at the vast expanse of the universe we can see. The fact is that we cannot see the end of it and for all we know it may be infinite. Can a finite bang create an infinite universe? Or is it more fitting to believe an infinite God created an infinite universe to testify to His own unsearchable depths? Look in any direction and you will see evidences of an infinite God.

If you look outward, the earth begins to look small as we enter the solar system. This then begins to look small when you see our galaxy. The galaxy looks small when you see the expanse of the universe and we can see no end. In fact, what we thought was empty space turns out to have only appeared empty because of our inability to look beyond our point in space. The more our ability to look outward grows, the more we realize that we haven't skimmed the surface of what is out there. The sun is 109 times bigger than our earth, but that pales in comparison to Antares which is nearly 100 times bigger than our sun. Our planet becomes microscopic compared to Antares which is approximately 10,900 times larger than earth.

If you look downward you also see infinity. There was a time when man could only see with the naked eye. The little dots swimming in water were thought to be the smallest living organism and dust was the smallest particles man could observe. When technology gave us the ability to see beyond what our natural eyes could observe, we found that there were microbes living and moving in a world that could live in a drop of water. We soon found out that viruses were a fraction of the size of what we thought was the smallest living creature. We found that molecules were smaller than cells and that they were assembled by yet smaller parts. When the electron microscope arrived, we found that atoms were the particles that made up everything. As technology advanced, we found that atoms were not the smallest particles for they were made up of electrons and neutrons which are kept in orbit around a nucleus by a small magnetic field.

Now do we assume that this is the end simply because we have reached the limits of our technology? Perhaps we should learn from our earlier misconceptions and realize that an infinite God has built creation upon His infinity to show man his own limitations and realize that it all points to the glory of God.

Faith is the knowledge of God and as we honestly explore the knowledge of our universe, faith is strongly affirmed. It is a false statement to say that faith is not by knowledge for the Bible declares that faith comes by hearing the word of God and that is indeed knowledge. It would be true to say that faith cannot be found by mere knowledge without ever seeking the knowledge of God. The Bible states that man who is devoid of the knowledge of God is "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.[15]"

The type of argumentation Dawkins uses as examples to back his arguments against reasonable faith unfortunately is common among Christians. Apathy is a great threat among Christians for when so-called facts are presented they are accepted as proof and rarely challenged. Very few will bother researching to see if the things being taught are so. This is true when it comes to false doctrine and it is true when it comes to what is falsely called science. It takes only a little effort to search out the facts to see if it is based on truth, speculation, or is blatantly false as we will see shortly when I examine the claims that Christianity is borrowed from paganism. I once watched a Christian and an atheist arguing about evolution. The atheist rattled off a barrage of claims that would have been easily picked apart for their inaccuracy, but the Christian asked, "Are you going to believe the facts, or are you going to believe the Bible?" It would have been more accurate to say that the facts make more sense through the lens of scripture than through the unfounded assumptions of evolution and then follow up with a reasonable explanation of the facts.

When Christians testify to the world that the Bible is not based on evidence and is in opposition to facts, it is no wonder that we are losing the cultural war for truth. Some have gone so far as to claim that there are two parallel truths and even though they are opposed to each other, both are true and must remain separate from one another. This is a false belief for God does not change, He is not the author of confusion, and since He is the Creator of all things, all things must ultimately point to His glory. Don't forget that even the atheist and everything that opposes God will one day bow and testify that Jesus is Lord to

the glory of the Father[16]. What is unseen does not contradict the truth of what is seen. We live in a fallen world that is corrupted by sin. Even though sin stands in opposition to the holiness of God, it does not contradict God but all of creation groans with anticipation for the final redemption when it will again be as God has designed it to be[17]. Corruption may pollute the truth, but it does not alter the truth. What is true in science is also true in faith. What is false in science will indeed contradict the truth of God. As we shall see, the evidences presented against God are in fact corruptions of the truth, which, of course, makes them a lie.

## Does Christianity Borrow from Pagan Religions?

In 2007 'Zeitgeist, The Movie' was released. The makers of this movie present a series of arguments against Christianity in which they claim to prove that the early Christians and the Bible plagiarized pagan religions to create a fictitious Jesus with borrowed attributes from other pagan gods. Even if you have not heard of this movie, you will most likely hear many of the claims that were popularized by this movie. By searching the Internet, a plethora of atheist websites will be found that recite the so-called facts found in this movie as though they were concrete evidences.

Many plagiarize this information by presenting them as their own arguments and pretend this information was discovered by examining the facts. Since these facts do not exist, it is not possible to hide their plagiarism. This also exposes the apathy of those who call themselves atheists for they have done nothing to verify the claims of this movie or validate any of the sources of this information. The evidence is so overwhelmingly against this movie that it brings into question the integrity of these producers.

The production 'Zeitgeist – the Movie' is another example of atheistic propaganda that is intended to overthrow the faith of Christians while inoculating the unbeliever from the gospel. In the writings of Richard Dawkins he stated that his goal was for Christians to pick up one of his books and be an atheist when they put it down. One of the strategies of atheism is to exclude information that contradicts their argument while introducing assumptions as facts that support their ideas. As we saw in an earlier portion of this writing, Dawkins admits that many of their theories are lacking in facts and need to be

supported by assumptions. After acknowledging their ignorance to how origins fit science he states, “But if we now import some new assumptions into our estimate, things change”.

This is the ‘strength’ of the atheistic argument. When the evidence can’t be proven, they plead ignorance but then assure us that their ideas are true. They ‘prove’ this by interjecting assumptions (or imaginary facts) which changes the outcome of how we would interpret the evidence. Zeitgeist also employs the power of assumption but then takes this much farther into the realm of blatant dishonesty as we shall soon see. It should not be surprising that an atheist would employ a dishonest argument. One of the fundamental beliefs of atheism is that man, at his core is good. For this reason, man determines moral tenets. In the humanistic mindset, there are no moral absolutes but man, through reason, is able to make the right moral choices based on the situation at hand.

An example of this can be seen through a political campaign controversy that occurred a few years back. A politician who was trying to push an agenda on socialized medicine made a claim that veterinary medicines are identical to medical prescriptions but cost significantly less. When this was challenged with evidence to the contrary he admitted that what he said he knew to be ‘untruthful’, but went on to justify the intentional deception by saying that it was intended to persuade others to come to a conclusion that he believed was true. In other words, to lie in order to persuade someone to your point of view is not considered to be wrong. If mankind determines what is morally acceptable, who is to say that lying is wrong? It becomes merely a tool of persuasion.

Zeitgeist the Movie employs this very practice as we shall soon see. The movie is divided into three parts. The first part is dedicated to convincing the viewer that the Bible was plagiarized from pagan religions. One of the ironic scenes in this movie was a clip from ‘Network: 1976’ where a speaker is scolding the audience for being so dumbed down that they believe whatever they see on media. The movie then goes on to capitalize on this weakness by using the same media to misrepresent the truth knowing that the masses would believe it simply because this media claims it to be so. While informing the viewer that this same media is used to deceive, they then use it themselves to deceive. It is amazing that they tipped their hand to the audience and still the masses accepted what was fed to them without question and now atheists are echoing the information in this film as fact without verifying any of it.

In Part 1, the viewer is bombarded with over an hour's worth of claims against the trustworthiness of the Bible. Obviously it would take a book's worth of rebuttals to answer them all, but that shouldn't be necessary. As I stated earlier, one of the tactics of atheism is to bombard you with so many objections that it becomes impossible to answer every question. Machinegun fire argumentation only insulates the argument from being honestly examined. It also gives the false impression that the evidence is so overwhelming that many are persuaded to assume their point is true without taking the time to examine it. It is an attempt to hypnotize the masses with information overload.

It should be a sufficient rebuttal to answer the strongest objections, for if the strength of the argument fails the test of evidence, the petty objections have little bearing. In the examination of this atheist film I will show the misrepresented information of their main arguments, but I also want to look at the points raised in light of the scriptures. Why are there similarities between pagan religions and biblical accounts? Rebutting the claims is only half the issue. We also should have an answer so that we understand how this all fits into our faith and affirms our confidence in the scriptures.

The two main arguments of this movie is that the Bible plagiarized pagan religions through the story of the Egyptian god Horus and the pagan astrology practices through the zodiac. Zeitgeist applies most of its biblical criticism through these two examples so these will be the main focus of this examination.

## Horus

It is claimed that Jesus was given the attributes of dozens of pagan gods beginning with Horus. It is falsely said that the story of Horus is from 3000 BC, he was born December 25$^{th}$, born of a virgin, his birth was announced through a star in the east, adored by three kings, teacher at 12 years of age, baptized at 30, had 12 disciples, walked on water, called the lamb of God and the light, betrayed by Typhon, crucified, dead three days and resurrected.

Those making this claim are either completely ignorant or they are blatantly being 'untruthful' in order to persuade. In Christian circles we call this deception. Let's examine the story of Horus taken directly from the Egyptian Hieroglyphics where it was first discovered. The discovery of these Hieroglyphics was made in the mid 1800s and the story of Horus was translated

by Chabas in 1857 in the Revue Archéologique, p. 65 ff.

The Egyptian story begins with the god Osiris who inherited the earth from his father Keb and the sovereignty of heaven from his mother Nut. Isis, the mother of Horus, was the sister and wife of Osiris - not a virgin as these Bible critics claim. There is no story of a virgin birth in this myth nor does it contain any references to a holy spirit overshadowing her to give miraculous conception. The myth claims that she was a 'witch-goddess' whose tongue was trained to perfection and she cast spells non-stop to place protection on Osiris and his shrine from evil enemies. According to the Egyptian hieroglyphics, Osiris was killed in a war with the evil god Set and cast to the ground. Isis transformed herself into a bird and spent a great length of time searching for Osiris' body until she found it. She tried to revive him but could not. She fanned her wings to produce air that caused the body of Osiris to move and she drew out his essence wherefrom she produced Horus. Horus would later reclaim the rights of his father and defeat Set.

The latter part of this myth varies slightly from earlier accounts. This hieroglyphic was estimated to have been written under the XVIIIth Dynasty (1550-1292 BC) and varies slightly from the traditions that are believed to date as far back as the 5th or 6th Dynasties (between 2500BC and 2184 BC). In earlier legends the account of drawing out the essence of Osiris are not mentioned. The original story (around 2500 BC) claimed that Isis reassembled the body parts of Osiris and he had just enough life left in him to have relations with his wife and conceived Horus.

You should be able to see some immediate contradictions between Egyptian mythology and the claim that Horus and Jesus are related. There was no implication of a virgin birth and Zeitgeist misrepresents the date to add to its credibility but doesn’t mention the fact that the Horus myth didn’t include him receiving his dead father’s essence until as late as 1292 BC. In Egyptian mythology, Horus could not have been crucified and raised after three days for they attest that Horus never died. Some accounts claim that Horus was his father Osiris brought back to life through the womb of Isis, but it does not involve crucifixion or three days in the grave. Crucifixion as a method of execution did not arise until around 600 BC.

Crucifixion was a method of execution used by the Persians, Seleucids, Carthaginians, and Romans from approximately 600 BC to 400 AD when

Constantine banned the practice in Rome. Earlier forms of crucifixion were not performed on a cross, but by impaling the malefactor on a wooden pole. The Romans altered this form of execution in order to prolong life and prolong the agony of execution. The Roman government came up with the method that we now recognize as the cross where malefactors were nailed by their hands and feet to a cross and allowed to slowly die. Atheists claim that the cross was used as a method of execution for many of the pagan gods, but during the early years of crucifixion the cross was not used. The claim that hundreds of pagan gods were crucified is a false statement and no references are provided that would point to an origin for this claim.

The remainder of the claims about the relationship between Horus and Jesus hold equal validity – none. There are sights that are supposedly from an Egyptologist that make all these claims, but there are no references to hard facts, only conjectures – or should we say assumptions. Some of these attributes are a combination of different pagan gods and some cannot be found at all in pagan mythology (Egyptian or otherwise). Some Horus stories equate the essence he received from his dead father Osiris is equivalent to Osiris returning from the dead, but reincarnation is a common pagan belief today and is not comparable to the resurrection of Christ and doesn't fit the claim that Horus was raised from the dead.

Another humorous irony is that this great Egyptologist that many atheist cite is Gerald Massey. Massy is the first known to make the claim that Jesus is a copy of Horus. He also makes the connection between Jesus and 2000 other pagan gods of which Zeitgeist repeats as a fact and rapidly scrolls 2000 names across the screen. The humor of this claim is that Gerald Massey was not a studied Egyptologist; he was a poet who died in 1913 and has no credentials with anyone but the atheists who cite him thinking that he was a researcher. This error was further propagated by Acharya S (her real name is Dorothy Murdock) in her book 'The Christ Conspiracy'. She also sells a book called 'A Companion Guide to Zeitgeist'.

Many of the so-called facts are unsubstantiated claims from fictional writers and this 'evidence' finds its origins solely in the imaginations of these writers. Like Dawkins who interjects conjured up evidence to supposedly 'clarify' his arguments, these experts also interject conjectures and present them as facts to manipulate their audience into thinking that there is a basis for these claims. In any other arena this false testimony would be considered perjury.

## The Star in the East

The claim that wise men followed a star from the east also is quite an embellishment from the truth. It is only the radical critics of Jesus that seem to take one word or phrase and transform it into imaginary evidence. Consider this song to the myth taken from the Pyramid Text, Teta, l. 276.

> Thy sister Isis cometh to thee rejoicing in her love for thee. Thou hast union with her, thy seed entereth her. She conceiveth in the form of the star Septet (Sothis). Horus-Sept issueth from thee in the form of Horus, dweller in the star Septet. Thou makest a spirit to be in him in his name 'Spirit dwelling in the god Tchentru.' He avengeth thee in his name of 'Horus, the son who avenged his father.' Hail, Osiris, Keb hath brought to thee Horus, he hath avenged thee, he hath brought to thee the hearts of the gods, Horus hath given thee his Eye, thou hast taken possession of the Urert Crown thereby at the head of the gods. Horus hath presented to thee thy members, he hath collected them completely, there is no disorder in thee. Thoth hath seized thy enemy and hath slain him and those who were with him."

The only mention of a star is in relation to Horus being called the dweller in the star Septet. So the critics have seized upon the word ‘star’ and equated it to the biblical account of the Babylonians who saw the star from the East. Notice that another account from the Egyptian myth of Horus also acknowledges that Horus was conceived by the union between Isis and Osiris – not a virgin birth as Zeitgeist and ‘The Christ Conspiracy’ claims.

## Baptism at 30

The claim that Horus was baptized at the age of thirty is a completely fabricated account. In the Egyptian stories, Horus was never baptized, never walked on water, was never called the Lamb of God and was never betrayed by Typhon. Acharya S. made this claim in her book but there are no supporting documents other than that of the poet G. Massey. This is far from a credible source and how it could become a great controversy over a writing of a pagan poet more than 100 years ago is beyond comprehension. It should give the Christian great confidence to know that the best evidence against the biblical account of Jesus was an imaginary musing of a dead poet.

Gerald Massey does claim to have gotten his ideas from ancient text; however,

he does not cite the text he supposedly translated from. Since he appears to be the only one who found these secret texts and it cannot and has not been verified by any credible source, it does not stand as evidence but only speculation at best. Many have searched the ancient texts he studied, but none have found any evidence to support his writings. Since Massey never cited any original text, his writings show to be more of a fictional story than an attempt at translation.

The movie also quotes James Frazer as one of its experts, but he also states that his work does not represent a whole system of mythology. In other words, the characters came from mythology and much of what he wrote was intended to be fictional. Once again there are no sources provided by Frazer. None of these claims can be found in the actual ancient mythology. Massey and Frazer make radical claims that differ greatly from what is known and verified by actual evidence and Acharya S quotes Massey and Frazer as the source for her evidence. Zeitgeist quotes all three as though they were independently verified sources while hiding from the audience the fact that they are quoting from each other and have created a circular quoting system. They quote each other but none use historical evidence or quote from any credible researched work. Many have searched the text Massey supposedly studied, but independent research has not been able to turn up any of Massey's claims.

The example of Horus not only falls short of proof, but it fails in every aspect. There is no comparison for the stories do not even come close to each other. The critics who hold up Horus even go as far as to claim that angels announced to Isis the coming birth of Horus, but Egyptian mythology did not have angels. Each character in this myth was considered to be a god and there was no announcement until after the birth of Horus.

## Issa (Isa)

The movie did not put a lot of emphasis on Issa, but this was listed in the list of gods and is emphasized in the 'Christ Conspiracy' book by Acharya S. Since it is likely that Christians will be presented with this character at some point, it should be addressed here. In her book, Murdock (Acharya S) states the following:

> "The Arabian Issa purportedly lived around 400 BCE in the western Arabian region of Hijaz, where also existed places called Galilee, Bethsaida and Nazareth, a town that was not founded in Palestine until after "Jesus of Nazareth's" alleged era. The similarities between the

Arabian Issa and the Palestinian Jesus are many and profound."

As is the pattern among the circle of quotations between Murdock, Massey, and Frazer, no legitimate historical citations were provided and there is no verification of these claims. Contrary to Murdock's claim, Galilee, Bethsaida and Nazareth were cities in Israel long before the era of Jesus and long before 400 BC. According to archaeologists, Bethsaida was founded around the tenth century BC[18]. This is six hundred years earlier than Murdock's claim. Galilee is mentioned as far back as the book of Joshua which far predates 400 BC. This and the other five books of the Bible where Galilee is mentioned were translated into Greek in the third century BC and these text go well back into ancient times. This also nullifies Murdock's claim that Galilee was not a city until the era of Christ.

Nazareth is not mentioned in Jewish writings until after 300 AD. According to archaeology, there were probably fewer than 35 families living in Nazareth and it had very little significance. The absence of small towns should not be disturbing to the Christian for none of the other small towns would have made it into Jewish records without something noteworthy occurring. The Jews mocked the idea of the Messiah coming out of Nazareth in the scriptures. Nathaniel scoffed at the idea saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"[19] So it shouldn't be shocking that a small town that had no respect would not be noteworthy in historical records. It also is not mentioned in Arabian regions either. In Muslim writings it appears after the eighth or ninth century AD but these refer to the same city as is mentioned in scripture. Murdock claims that Galilee, Bethsaida and Nazareth are in the western Hijaz region (in Arabia), but in reality they are west of the Hijaz region – which is Israel. In other words, the Arabian writings and the Bible's writing are pointing to the same cities in the same region. She has slightly altered her geography in order to fabricate evidence to cast doubts on the scripture.

It was claimed that Jesus travelled through Tibet and India during what is called the lost years of Jesus (the time between the age of 12 and the age of 30). Ironically, these critics also claim that Jesus never existed, yet He somehow traveled through Tibet and India. Isa (or Issa) is the Arabic name for Jesus; however, in Islam, they do not believe the Bible's teaching on Jesus. Isa is the Muslim version of Jesus and Islam teaches that Isa was only a prophet and did

not die on the cross. Islam teaches that the cross is an abomination for they consider it a disgrace. As Christians we agree that the cross is a disgrace for the shame of the cross is part of our punishment that Jesus bore for our sins. An important message of our faith is that though He existed as God, Jesus humbled Himself, took on the role of a bondservant and willingly suffered the shame of the cross to bear the judgment of our sins[20]. Muslims do not believe this so we must not mistake the teachings of the Muslim Isa as being the same as the Jesus of Christianity. Though they point to the same period in history and the same person, what we believe about Jesus is vastly different.

Most of the stories of Isa come from writings associated with Islam. Muhammad lived between 570 and 632 AD and the writings of the Qur'an are not believed to have been written down for more than 100 years after the death of Muhammad. The earliest manuscripts are from 800 AD. Murdock is quoting from writings written in the beginning of the ninth century as verifiable evidence for something that she states took place four hundred years before Christ. The 400 BCE date given by Murdock is misinformation for the Muslims believe the Arabic Isa to be born of the virgin Mary (or Maryam in Aramaic). The dates of Isa is the same date as the Jesus of the Bible. In fact, a Muslim will tell you that Isa is Jesus of the Bible though they do not believe in His divinity, crucifixion, or resurrection. It is unknown where she pulled this date from, but the contradictions should not be surprising at this point.

There is no historical evidence that Jesus traveled through Tibet and India during the lost years or after the resurrection. The only source of this information comes from the religions that conjure up these sources. The claim that Jesus went into India with Mary Magdalene also has no merit or evidence, yet that does little to deter the rumors from being presented by New Age religions and atheists who are willing to desperately grasp at anything in hopes that something will pan out in their favor.

## Tammuz

It is also claimed that the Jews borrowed from the pagan god Tammuz. Supposedly Tammuz is worshipped as a savior in Jerusalem and referred to as 'Lord' or 'Adonai'. The god Tammuz was only the savior of Inanna (which is also called Ishtar). In Babylonian mythology, Tammuz travels to the underworld to trade his soul for Inanna. He was not considered the savior of man for he only

saved Inanna. The claim that this god was worshiped in Jerusalem is misleading. The only connection to Jerusalem was the occupation of Babylon which worshipped this god among many other gods. It can easily be claimed that many gods were worshipped in Jerusalem for the Bible itself expressly states that the land was corrupted by idolatry before the arrival of the Jews. Later the Jewish people were judged for their idolatry and after their captivity Babylon occupied the region and worshipped other gods as we can see by the introduction of foreign gods during the Babylonian occupation of Samaria described in the Bible in 2 Kings 17:26-33.

There are over 2000 gods that this movie claims have the attributes of Jesus. The reader is free to look up the poems of G. Massey and Acharya S. to research all two thousand if desired, but what has been examined here should be sufficient to show the misrepresentation and fabrication of false evidence intended for no other purpose than to cast doubt on the truth. It would be tedious to go through additional gods that Bible critics have claimed Christianity was patterned after, but thus far all have proved to be exaggerations, misrepresentation, and fabrications of the narrators and sources they quote. The myth of Horus was presented as the strength of the argument and the remainders were cited with similar claims. Since Horus was presented as the most credible example, it should be sufficient to say that if this has failed the test of scrutiny, the others hold little hope of validating the plagiarism claims. The other gods examined have also proven to be an embellishment of the facts as well.

Perhaps we should ask why it is necessary to fabricate evidence in an effort to disprove the Bible? If the evidence is a fabrication, it stands to reason that the entire belief systems around these are fallacious as well. Thus far we have a zero percent accuracy from the evidence provided by the critics of scripture. The remainder of the evidence does not improve their percentage of accuracy.

## The Zodiac and the Bible

One consistent problem with the flawed logic of Zeitgeist is the fact that the makers of this movie consistently mix modern astrology and its terms with ancient astrology. For example, the narrator claims that the number 12 is replete throughout astrology and compares this with the usage of this symbolism in the Bible. However, many ancient zodiacs also focus on the number eighteen, six, and three as well as twelve. Modern astrology has evolved to be quite a variation from the ancient practice.

Another example is the claim that the Southern Crux (or Southern Cross) was part of ancient practices. Bible critics claim that ancient religions believed that the sun spent three days in the Southern Crux December 22-24th before returning northward and emerging from the cross three days later to ultimately be celebrated as a new life several months afterward on Easter. The claim is that Christianity borrowed this pagan belief and created a Jesus myth where He was dead three days and returned to life. This is not possible for the Southern Crux was not discovered and integrated into astrology until the 1500s. That is more than one thousand, five hundred years after the birth of Christianity. The discovery of the Southern Cross was made by a Portuguese voyager named Andrea Corsali in 1515 BC. The National Library of Australia states the following:

> It provides the only known narrative of a Portuguese voyage in 1515 down the African coast, around the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Southern and Indian Oceans, making landfall at Goa on the Indian coast, later travelling down to Cochin at the foot of India. After rounding the Cape, Corsali observed the curious behaviour of an unrecorded group of Stars (the Southern Cross) which he described and illustrated. The letter was sent from Cochin to his patron, Giuliano de Medici, in Florence.[21]

The Southern Cross is out of view for most of the year and is not easily visible. This constellation cannot be seen above 27 degrees latitude south and is best seen in the month of May. This means that it is not possible that that it could have been viewed by astrologers during the month of December in ancient civilizations that are in the Northern hemisphere. The civilizations that practiced astrology (including nations around Israel and Egypt) could not have observed the Southern Cross for they are on the northern hemisphere and cannot see this constellation at any time of the year. For reasons unknown, the Zeitgeist movie omits this fact in order to persuade the audience to believe that this was an ancient worship that predates the Bible. It should be obvious that if the Southern Crux was not discovered until 1515, and since it was not found in any astrological practices until the 1600s, the story of the ancient world believing that the sun was dead on the cross for three days is clearly a fabrication as each of the other claims have proven to be thus far.

There are other flaws with this belief. Zeitgeist mixes and matches numbers, dates, and claims at will even though they contradict their own arguments.

December 25th is the date that the sun supposedly emerged from the cross which should be Easter, but they claim that the 25th was the birth of Jesus and try to pass this off as a parallel to an ancient myth. A myth that does not exist as we have seen. It should be noted that the Bible does not mention the date of Jesus' birth and it most certainly has no relationship with December 25th. This date did not enter into church traditions until it was made an official Catholic holiday around 400 AD. The scripture gives no date or timeframe for Jesus' birth other than the coalition to the Jewish feast days. It is most likely that Jesus was born on the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles that represents God abiding with His people. We will look at feast days shortly. This is an educated guess because there are no historic testimonies that would pinpoint the day when He was born.

## The Origin of Pagan Holidays

We will now explore and clearly disprove the claim that the Bible borrowed from the beliefs of astrology. Many of the holidays we celebrate today were not observed by the church during the first three centuries after Christ. As late as 245 AD, church leaders condemned observing certain holidays we celebrate today. Christmas, for example, was not listed as one of the feasts and festivals celebrated in the church in the middle of the third century. This celebration was added sometime in the second half of the third century. One of the distinguished early church theologians, Origen, repudiated the idea of celebrating the birthday of Christ by saying that keeping it "is as if he were king Pharaoh" (Homily 8 on Leviticus). Passover was celebrated but it was not celebrated as Easter until much later in church history.

Before going on I would like to state that I am not necessarily advocating that Christians stop celebrating Easter and Christmas. I am going to show historically that these were adopted from pagan rituals; however, it is up to the reader to determine whether this fact violates their consciences. It is strictly my personal opinion that this fact has little bearing on whether or not we participate in a specific holiday. The reason is that we are so far removed from pagan religions that we no longer put any meaning in the pagan symbolism. If someone puts a wreath up, it is a pretty decoration, but has no significance in worship. The Bible explains that there is a distinction in how we view pagan practices in two passages in Corinthians. Look first at **1 Corinthians 8:4-8**

> 4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that

*there is* none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

This passage is specifically addressing the issue that arose in the church concerning eating meat that had been offered to idols. The Corinthians lived in a pagan culture that was filled with idolatry. The problem that Paul is addressing is that some in the church were buying meat in the marketplace that had been used as a sacrifice to idols. Most likely this was discounted in price and some Christians were buying it. Other Christians were offended because it was used in a worship service to an idol. The church is being instructed that an idol is nothing more than an inanimate object and has no significance. Though they are called gods, they have no power to affect the Christian one way or another. It was up to the conscience of the Christian to determine whether they should eat or abstain from meats offered to idols.

When it comes to participating in idolatry, the scriptures go on to explain that idolatry is a direct violation of our faith. Look now at **1 Corinthians 10:19-21**

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20 But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

The only distinction between these to events in 1 Corinthians is the act of participating in worship. A Christian cannot submit to idolatry or any type of worship that focuses on something other than God. The idol is nothing, but to bow to an idol or worship it is an act of bowing to demons or Satan. What the

pagans do not realize is that they are not bowing to the idol, but to spirits of deception. A Christian who submits to deception is in conflict with God. This, of course, includes astrology. To put your trust in the stars or to draw direction for your life from them is an act of idolatry and is not compatible with the Christian faith.

Though the topic in these passages is specifically addressing the eating of meat and the practice of idolatry, the principles apply to the subject of holidays as well. Those who are weak in faith and offended at the pagan roots should avoid violating their consciences. Some may not be offended but choose not to observe holidays because it holds no real Christian significance to them or has become so worldly that they feel it detracts from the faith. Others may choose to celebrate these days. The problem arises only when the day becomes an object of worship or the pagan practices are used in worship. It is not the day, but our heart of worship that God honors. Now consider **Romans 14:5-7**

> 5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.
>
> 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.
>
> 7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

So we can see that the Bible instructs us to be persuaded in our own minds. You are not more faithful to God if you honor a holiday, nor are you more faithful to God if you do not honor a specific day. All things are done by faith. The same would hold true for the days we meet together. Some say the Sabbath (which is Saturday) is the day for worship, and some say Sunday is the day of worship for it is the day of Christ's resurrection. The fact is that the day is not the focus of worship, nor is there any specific day that must be honored over another. The command is that we be careful not to forsake assembling ourselves together for worship, encouragement, and doctrine[22]. We are also instructed not to judge or condemn those who choose to honor or not honor a holiday. Look at **Colossians 2:16-17**

> 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:
>
> 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

Those who focused on these practices were still focused on the shadow of things to come which came to fruition in Christ. Those who were not focused on Christ and the word of God were caught up in the Law that pointed to our salvation. Even so, as the church departs from true biblical Christianity in the last days, the focus will be more on practices and rituals than on understanding doctrine and faith. People will again be focused on worshiping the things that foreshadowed and pointed to Christ rather than focusing on Christ and the instructions He gave.

It was necessary to address this beforehand so that the reader would not be driven to the conclusion that they were in idolatry if they celebrated Christmas or Easter. Irenaeus and Polycarp both honored the Passover celebration in the second century, but it was not yet integrated with the traditions of Easter. There was a non-divisive controversy over which day to celebrate. Irenaeus thought it should be celebrated on the 15th of Nissan according to the Old Testament Passover, but Polycarp honored it on the 14th of Nissan in honor of Christ's crucifixion day. Polycarp was a disciple of John the apostle and chose to follow the traditions of the elders before him while others chose to honor the exact day of the Passover in Leviticus.

The early church did not refer to the Passover celebration as 'Easter'. This title entered the church traditions sometime between the third and fourth centuries. The word Easter originates from the pagan goddess Eostre, but the traditions are a mixture of springtime pagan rituals. Easter eggs and Easter bunnies are symbols of fertility that were integrated into pagan practices and were believed to give women fertility. Integrating these pagan rituals into the church holidays was considered to be a missionary effort by the Catholic church that rose to power shortly after the Emperor Constantine created a state sanctioned church. Pope Gregory I gave the following instructions to missionaries in 601 AD concerning their effort to reach pagans:

> "Because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this. [T]hey should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys." Bede, Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, (quoted in Encyclopedia Britannica, 1961 edition).

Gregory I didn't originate the practice of integrating pagan rituals into church

feasts, but his quote clearly shows that it was an accepted practice in this church organization after the time of Constantine. The Passover was celebrated and this celebration was traced back to the time of the apostles; however, there are no recorded celebrations of Easter until much later. Christmas celebrations were also absent from the church until the 500s. It was so-called missionary efforts such as the one given by Gregory I's instructions to integrate pagan holidays into church feasts in order to compromise with the pagans they were trying to proselytize that introduced these rituals into common church practices.

Christmas began to be celebrated during the fifth century and in AD 534, Christmas was officially recognized as a Catholic holiday. Merging Christian theology with pagan rituals is very unbiblical, but has been a problem as far back as Israel's beginnings when they merged idolatry with the Mosaic Law and continues in the church today. The church growth movement, Emerging church, Ecumenical, religious tolerance movements, and other such efforts are no different than what introduced pagan movements into the church during the 4th and 5th centuries. Just as the Catholic missionaries sought to make converts by offering pagan rituals in their services, the modern movements attempt to customize the gospel to fit the culture of unbelievers and integrate their values and practices into the modern church. The Bible condemns such practices and instructs those who once practiced idolatry to turn away from these things[23]. We are commanded to flee from idolatry[24] and to turn from the previous things of the world[25], not integrate them into a mixed religion.

It is beneficial for the Christian to be aware of the pagan origin of these holidays so that when this is introduced as evidence against the Bible, we will be able to explain that their origins do not come from the Bible and do not challenge our faith in Christ. As mankind departs from the word and loses focus on what it truly means to walk by faith, the world and doctrines contrary to the word always come in. Throughout history when the church became self-focused rather than scripture-focused, the effort became man driven and culturally influenced. When man is not walking by faith, the culture influences the church rather than the church influencing the culture. This has been true for the church since the time of the apostles and it was true in Israel during their descent into idolatry.

## Zodiac and Hebrew Practices

One of the criticisms against the Bible is the presence of paganism among the Jewish culture in the past. It is claimed that the early Jews borrowed pagan religious beliefs and integrated them into the Old Testament scriptures. There are indeed Hebrew traditions integrated in some zodiac symbols more than a thousand years before Christ, but this should not be surprising for the scriptures attest to this fact. Contrary to the claims that the Bible borrowed from the zodiac, it was the Jews who departed from God that borrowed from the Bible and brought religious symbols to the zodiac. However, this does not in any way compromise the scripture nor is astrology compatible with scripture. Look at

**Ezekiel 8:15-18**

> 15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations than these.
>
> 16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.
>
> 17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.
>
> 18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them.

Anyone who has taken the time to read the Old Testament has seen that Israel constantly went astray from the scriptures to pursue idolatry. The prophets by whom the Lord used to write the scriptures corrected Israel and proclaimed judgment for those who would not turn from idolatry. Rather than integrating paganism with the Bible, the scriptures continuously confront paganism throughout Israel’s history. It is the pagan religions that continuously change as they borrow from Christianity and other religions. Once God’s people begin to attempt to integrate pagan practices, they find themselves confronted by scripture and faced with a choice to depart from the Bible and reject God’s rebuke or repent and turn back to the word of God. Many have and will depart and they will carry only the symbols of Christianity but they cannot retain the gospel.

The time of Israel's history was no different than what the scripture describes. The pagan practices are described and condemned throughout the Old Testament. We have to remember that just because the Bible describes a historical event does not mean that the event is condoned. The fall of Israel in the Old Testament was judgment by God for their idolatry. The Bible and history attest to this fact. In Israel today there is a national park on Kibbutz Hefzibah where a mosaic of the zodiac stands today. According to the Beth Alpha website:

> Visitors can tour the Beth Alpha Synagogue National Park and see the most complete zodiac floor from the time when astrology held a place in the synagogue[26].

There was a time when the zodiac held a place in the synagogue but it was not so from the beginning when God called Israel as a people for Himself. During Elijah's day, he challenged 400 prophets of the pagan god Baal and attempted to turn Israel back to the Lord. During his discourse he stated, "How long will you stand between two opinions? If Baal is god, serve him, but if the Lord is God, serve Him"[27]. Israel did not abandon all of their religious practices given through the Law; they attempted to merge portions of their Jewish beliefs into the pagan religions they began to follow. Since the two are in direct conflict, they chose which of the scriptures they would follow and which they would integrate into paganism. The prophet is confronting this by stating that they could not serve two masters but while they were standing between two religions, they were outside of God's ways. Even though they thought they could stand between the two, God warned that they had departed from His truth and called them to repent.

After Israel's fall to the Babylonians, some of the people fled to Egypt and God sent the prophet Jeremiah to instruct them to turn back to the Lord so they could be restored. Before the Lord gave Jerusalem over to the Babylonian armies, He spoke in **Jeremiah 7:17-18**

> 17 Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?
>
> 18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the children of Israel credited this pagan goddess with their judgment and previous prosperity. Look now at **Jeremiah 44:18-19, 25-26**

> 18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.
>
> 19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?
>
> 25 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.
>
> 26 Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.

The queen of heaven was a pagan goddess that the people worshipped, burned incense to, and prayed to. They credited this goddess with being their redemptress and believed that offending her brought judgment. The Lord showed that He was their judge but they refused to turn to worship Him only; therefore, He proclaimed that they were no longer His people and had no right to claim Him as their God. There is only one ruler in heaven for the Lord states that He alone is our Redeemer and He will not share His glory with another[28]. Any prayers offered to the queen of heaven or any other god or goddess is paganism and a rejection of the word of the Lord.

So through the account given in scripture it should not be surprising to see Jewish influences in paganism. Let’s now go back and look at some of the claims where Bible critics attempt to connect the Bible to astrology.

## Virgo = Mary

The narrator of Zeitgeist states that the virgin Mary came from the zodiac symbol of Virgo without any reference as to where this assumption originated.

The narrator then claims that Virgo is often called the ‘house of bread’. He then explains that Bethlehem means ‘House of Bread’ and that since Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, there is a direct connection. The movie then states that the Bible borrowed the entire story of Jesus from the zodiac and these parallels provide proof.

The problem is that the movie makes claims that are from complete distortions and fabricated evidence. First, there is no reasonable evidence that connects Mary to Virgo other than the imaginations of those making this claim. There are many virgin goddesses throughout pagan history so having Virgo in the zodiac should not be a shock. There is also no evidence that Virgo is ever called the ‘house of bread’ and the word ‘Bethlehem’ does not appear on the zodiac. This is a complete fabrication – which should be no surprise at this point. The integration of Hebrew words in the zodiac validate the Bible’s claims that the Jews worshiped stars and the sun, but the absence of astrological practices in the Bible discredit the claim that the Bible borrowed from the zodiac.

Some zodiac wheels contain the word ‘Bethulah’. In Hebrew ‘Beth’ means ‘house’ and ‘ulah’ means ‘place of pure water’. The movie also stated that Mary was called ‘Bethel’, the ‘house (beth) of God (el)’. In some zodiacs the word ‘bethel’ is found, but depending on which variation of astrology you examine, it either refers to the center of the wheel or each individual constellation. At times each of the twelve constellation symbols are referred to as a house of that god, and other astrological explanations call the entire wheel the house of God. So it is misleading to say that Virgo is called the house of God without informing the viewer that each constellation symbol is also called the house of God. None of these fit the biblical account and the movie’s forcing of false definitions in no way provides evidence of parallels to the birth of Jesus and nothing supports the argument that the Bible borrows from the zodiac.

## Jesus and the Twelve Constellations

Bible critics attempt to draw a parallel between Jesus and the zodiac by claiming that the sun travels around the twelve constellations and Jesus traveled with twelve apostles. The twelve apostles relate directly to the twelve tribes of Israel and not to the twelve constellations. Jesus stated that when the Kingdom is established, they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel[29]. The twelve tribes long predates the introduction of paganism into

Israel, so this has no significance to astrology. Why would Jesus have picked any other number of apostles? God has indeed provided symbolism throughout scripture in order to testify of His power to foreordain events and reveal His plan, but that in no way equates to pagan symbolism.

## Is the cross a pagan symbol?

In the Zeitgeist movie it is falsely claimed that the shorthand symbol for the zodiac was a cross with a circle in the middle. They then show various pictures of church steeples with circles in the center of the cross. This is a false statement based on half-truths. Many zodiacs have the sun with four half-moons that indicate the four directions of North, South, East and West. Some do not draw these half-moons but instead use a straight line to indicate each direction. The movie inaccurately depicts this as a cross with a circle in the center, but the zodiac is a circle with four even lines dividing the twelve symbols into four groups of three constellations with the lines pointing to the four directions on a compass. Critics show crosses containing a circle, but the zodiac is a circle containing a compass.

The narrator of Zeitgeist refers to ‘the cross of the zodiac’ and gives the impression that this is a term used in astrology. This is misleading for astrologers did not refer to this as a cross but call it the wheel of the zodiac or the wheel of fortune. The movie also presents a modern picture of the zodiac written with English words. Since English did not exist as a language in antiquity, this is a false impression, but also reveals that the makers of this movie have used modern zodiacs and falsely implied that these are the same as those of antiquity. The modern face of astrology is quite different than that of ancient times. Even ancient zodiac symbols vary greatly depending on which region of civilization you examine.

The movie also draws parallels between the word ‘sun’ and the title ‘son’ such as Son of God. This is another attempt to mislead for although these two words sound phonetically similar in English, they are not similar in the languages that would have been used in antiquity. Changing one vowel will not transform the word into son in any of the languages presented in the movie or in any ancient language that worshiped using the zodiac. In Hebrew, son would be ‘ben’ or ‘bar’ while ‘sun’ is ‘shemesh’. In Greek, son is ‘huios’ but sun is ‘Helios’. In Latin son is ‘fili’ but sun is ‘sol’. Knowing this should clarify that the ancient worship of the sun cannot be mistaken as the coming of the Son of God. English

did not exist during this time so there is no phonetic coalition between the words ‘sun’ and ‘son’ in any language that would have been used prior to the rise of English as a language.

## Ages and the Bible and the Precession of the Equinoxes

This portion of the claim that the Bible borrowed from the zodiac provides the greatest amount of contradictions than any other argument they present. Bible critics address Jesus’ statement, “I will be with you until the end of the world” by pointing out that the word ‘world’ is the Greek word ‘aion’ (or aeon). The word ‘aion’ means age. The word ‘aion’ can be translated as ‘age’, but the connection made to astrology is quite a stretch to say the least. It is claimed without any justification that Jesus was referring to the Precession of the Equinoxes. The Precession of the Equinoxes is a period of time where the sunrise of the Spring Equinox occurs in a different sign of the zodiac. This holds a significant meaning in astrology and is often called ‘the great year’. This event occurs every 2,150 years. Each of these events are referred to as a new age; hence the significance of the song ‘This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius’ that was popular in the 1970’s.

According to this theory, Moses ushered in the age of Aries when taking the children of Israel out of Egypt and Jesus ushered in the age of Pices at His birth. Pices is depicted as two fish and supposedly this was why Jesus chose fishermen and why the Christian symbol of fish was adopted. Of course many of Jesus’ disciples were not fishermen and the symbol of the fish is a reference to Jesus’ statement that His followers would become fisher’s of men. This theory also claims that when Jesus instructed His disciples to go into the city and they will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water, this was Aquarius and Jesus was instructing His disciples to follow him into the Age of Aquarius. The theory also teaches that when the Israelites were worshipping the golden calf, God did not get angry because they were committing idolatry, but was angry because they were worshipping in the ‘age of Taurus’ (pictured as a bull), but Moses had led them into the age of Aries (the ram). Supposedly this is also why the Jews used ram’s horns as trumpets.

This theory is pushed heavily in the Zeitgeist movie. The first major contradiction of this series of claims is the dates. According to the narrator of Zeitgeist, Moses ushered in the age of Aries and Jesus ushered in the age of Pices. According to Astrology, the Age of Aries is between 2308 BC and 148

BC. The Exodus took place between 1495 BC and 1452 BC (including 40 years of wandering). This is nearly a thousand years off from the claim that Moses ushered in the age of Aries, so the makers of this movie have altered the dates to fit their point of view.

As you should already be postulating, if the age of Aries ended in 148 BC, the Age of Pices had to begin at that time. Since Jesus is believed to be born sometime between 3 and 4 AD, He would have been 144 years too late to bring the world into the age of Pices. It is also ironic that this theory claims that God was angry for honoring the age of Taurus during the time when they should have been honoring Aries, but it is then claimed that Jesus instructed His disciples to honor the Age of Aquarius more than two thousand years before its time.

The truth is that the days and times of astrology do not coincide with the Bible and I believe this is by God's foreknowledge and plan. All the major events of the Bible fall out of line with the dates honored by pagan religions so that His people would not get caught up in these practices. The Bible warns that to honor dates and times takes the Christian outside of biblical Christianity. Look at **Galatians 4:9-11**

> 9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?
> 10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.
> 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

When the Galatians were caught up in the meaningless things of the world religions, the apostles feared for the faith of that church. Those who turn their worship into days, months, times and years are practicing a vain religion that is no longer by faith. By faith I mean the faith that comes from God. We can have faith in astrology or any other pagan practice, but it is vain and separates us from the Lord. Faith is given by God through His word and we are called to keep ourselves in the will of God through obedience. Obeying the word is an act of faith.

## Does History Testify of Jesus' existence?

This will be the last claim that the Bible borrowed from paganism that we will examine. Many atheists try to eliminate Christianity by claiming that Jesus never

existed. This is also stressed heavily in the Zeitgeist movie and to back this claim it is stated that there is not one historian who ever mentioned Jesus. Knowing that Christ is mentioned by several historians, the narrator attempts to disqualify these leaders by stating that they never used the name ‘Jesus’ but only referred to someone called ‘Christ’. The movie then claims that Christ is a title meaning anointed but falsely claims that it could not refer to an individual. Pliny the Younger and Josephus are called out specifically by the narrator since they pose the most difficulty for this assumption. Pliny’s account is disqualified because he uses the name ‘Christ’ and Joseph is claimed to be a proven fraud.

Let us first look at the account of Pliny the Younger who was a Roman governor. In his statement where he speaks of Christ, he is addressing the resistance of Christians. In the Roman culture during the birth of the church, pagan religions were rampant. The Romans allowed for the worship of any god as long as Caesar was honored as the Lord of all. The Christians could not honor the Emperor over Jesus nor would they worship him as a god. Pliny the Younger’s writings testify that Christians were sent off to be executed for their “stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy that ought not to go unpunished.” He then stated that “they [Christians] would not recant and they worshipped and honored Christ as if he were a god”.

Now are we to believe that the Christians were being executed for worshipping Christ as a god, but this is not referring to the Christ that Christians worship? The absurdity of this claim would be comical if it were not for the fact that so many people believe this claim simply because it is presented as a documentary. The only person Christians have ever regarded as Christ is Jesus so it is fallacious to attempt to deny that the testimonies found in Roman historical documents are not valid as evidence.

The claim that Josephus is a proven fraud is also a dishonest attempt to force a false claim as truth. The truth is that Josephus is regarded as a valid historical resource. He presents Jewish history as well as providing a valuable eyewitness account of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. In the writings of Josephus the following is stated:

> Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as had a veneration for truth. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles: - he was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the

> cross, those that loved him at first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had spoken of these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him: thus the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Of this account, the only things in dispute are the references that refer to His divinity. If you read this account, it began as an explanation of the works of Pilate and Jesus is spoken of since his trial under Pilate was a very significant event in history. Some believe that phrases like, “if it be lawful to call him a man”, and “he was the Christ” were added later. When you read this account, Josephus never identifies himself with Christianity but refers to them as a separate group. There is no evidence that Josephus ever accepted Jesus as the Christ; however, he clearly verifies that the Christians followed Jesus as the Christ and acknowledges that He was known as a teacher, known for His works, and that He was condemned under Pilate. He acknowledges the Christians were called after Jesus’ name. This account fits into the timeline of history he gave as does the death of the Lord’s brother, James which Josephus also writes about a bit later in this volume. Even if someone removes the references to His divinity, it still cannot be denied that Josephus validates the history of Jesus. The works of Josephus mentioning Jesus are quoted by Origen in 230 AD, Eusebius in AD 324, and Ambrose in 360 AD. This serves to validate their acceptance of this historian within 130 years after his death.

The Jewish Talmud is also a credible historical testimony that speaks of Jesus even though it is quite a hostile witness. The Talmud is the central text of mainstream Judaism and contains the records of rabbinic discussions that pertain to the Jewish law, customs and history. While the Talmud is very hostile to Jesus, it serves as one of the most important testimonies to His life outside of the Bible. Those hostile to Christ would have no motivation to give any credibility to Him, but this historical archive has validated the scriptures in many ways. Consider this quote from the Talmud:

> On Passover Eve they hanged Jesus of Nazareth. He practiced sorcery, incited and led Israel astray...Was Jesus of Nazareth deserving of a search for an argument in his favor? He was an enticer and the Torah says, 'You shall not spare, nor shall you conceal him! (Sanhedrin 43A)

Even though the Jews who opposed Jesus claimed His miracles were sorcery and leading Israel astray, they verify the fact that He not only existed, but performed miracles, taught, and was hanged on a cross on the eve of Passover. In 1242 the

French crown ordered the Talmud to be burned for its derogatory claims against Jesus, but fortunately it survived and stands today as a testimony to the claims of scripture. As you can see, the claim that history is silent concerning Jesus is very much inaccurate. Two of the three witnesses in favor of Jesus cited here are hostile to Jesus, yet they verify the biblical history of Jesus. Even though their intentions are also hostile, the Zeitgeist movie acknowledges that two other Roman historians mention Christ as well.

## *Symbolism and the Bible*

Bible critics point to symbolism in the Old Testament and claim that the writers of the New Testament borrowed from this information. Ironically, if the prophecies in the Old Testament that foreshadowed the plan of God were ignored by the New Testament, this would then be touted as evidence against the Bible by these same critics. The truth is that God has always used these symbolic foreshadows in order to reveal the foreordination of His plan. The apostle Paul states it well in the following passages:

> **Colossians 1:26** *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
>
> **Hebrews 8:5** Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.
>
> **Colossians 2:16-17** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:
> 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

All the things in the Old Testament were a shadow or pattern of things to come, but the body (or literally substance) is Christ. Much of the Old Testament is symbolic to point to what would be fulfilled in Christ. This shows the power of God to perform His word for He has ordained the events of the Old Testament in order to reveal the glory of God in the New Testament. What was veiled in the Old Testament is unveiled through Christ and made manifest to the saints by the Spirit through the word of God.

It also should not be surprising to see how many pagan religions mimic the symbolism of the Bible. Even though we have archaeological evidence that dates back to the time of Moses and biblical accounts that go back 6,000 years, critics of the Bible will imply that the Bible borrowed from pagan cultures without even considering the idea that pagan cultures would borrow from the Hebrew culture of the Bible. It is clearly demonstrated that pagan cultures have always evolved their myths as they discovered new ideas from other cultures and religions and this continues to this day.

Consider the fact that so many religions borrow from Christianity today and even claim to be religions from the same Bible. Ask any Mormon and they will tell you that they are Christian and that they believe the Bible, yet when you examine their beliefs it is far different than that of the scriptures. Joseph Smith began the Mormon religious movement in 1827 and published the Book of Mormon in 1830. The Book of Mormon is replete with symbolism, events, angels and people borrowed from scripture, yet the belief system greatly differs from the Bible. Here is an example from the Bible and the Book of Mormon: The Bible, Isaiah, 9:1 says, "When at first he lightly afflicted the land of Nebulun and the land of Naphtali; and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations."

In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi, 19:1, it says: "When at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations."

There are hundreds of exact phrases from the King James Version of the Bible that are interwoven in the Book of Mormon. While there are similarities, there remains a clear distinction from the beliefs of Mormonism and the doctrines of Christianity derived from the truth of scripture. The Mormon religion teaches that God was once a man and that man, if he follows their religion, will become a god. The Bible teaches that God has never been anything but God and the Lord Himself declares that no god existed before Him and no god will exist after[30]. The Mormon missionary that goes door to door presents a gospel that, on the surface, is very similar to the scriptures, but when examined deeper it is clear that only certain ideas are borrowed from the Bible.

There are many doctrinal differences that create a wide distance between Christianity and Mormonism, yet this does not prevent there from being similarities between the Bible and the Mormon religion. If we can see in our modern era a pagan religion adopting portions of scripture, it should be of little concern that ancient pagan religions would also borrow from scripture. The challenge of the critics is to find examples where the Bible changed by adopting pagan rituals and beliefs. We see many evidences of pagan cultures borrowing ideas from the Bible, but no examples of the Bible borrowing from paganism. Even in the height of Israel’s idolatry, the pagan world remained separate from the scriptures. The mixture between Judaism and paganism is rebuked by God through the prophets, but never are the scriptures altered by pagan thought.

There are other modern religions that borrow ideas from scripture. The Jehovah's Witnesses have an altered translation (The New World Translation) and have many similarities with Christianity, but they do not accept the divinity of Christ nor do they accept the cross of Jesus' crucifixion. Like the Mormons, the Watch Tower Saints have a merit system rather than accepting the Bible's call to receive salvation by grace through faith without works. This religion began by Charles Taze Russell in 1874 and the New World Translation was first published in 1961. The beliefs of this religion did not arise until the late 1800s so it cannot be denied that all similarities with biblical Christianity are borrowed from the Bible.

There have been literally thousands of pseudo-Christian cults over the last two thousand years and all have had many parallels to biblical Christianity. In fact, the similarities between new religions and Christianity are tools used to proselytize new recruits into the movement. In order to deceive, these movements must persuade followers that they are biblically based. Once a follower joins the movement, unbiblical ideas are slowly introduced until each person is led into the belief system of the cult. You may remember the Heaven's Gate cult that committed mass suicide in 1997. This was founded by Marshall Applewhite when he claimed to be the return of Jesus Christ. In his teachings, he said that he was saying nothing different than what Jesus said in the New Testament. He backed up his claims by presenting many similar teachings but did so along side pagan ideas. His goal was to make the cult sound biblical so that people would accept his pagan teachings.

Even during the time of the apostles this was a serious problem. Gnosticism was being introduced into the church by taking the gospel message and mixing it with pagan doctrines. While the label of Gnosticism is not specifically used in the Bible, the teachings and ideas are specifically addressed in several epistles and rebuked by the apostles. It wasn't called Gnosticism because it was being passed off as biblical Christianity. Almost every letter from the apostles contains some type of warning against the subtle deceptions of false teaching. The apostle Paul states it well in **Galatians 1:8-9**

> 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
> 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

The apostles instructed the church that even if they should return and teach something different than what has already been delivered, the church should consider them accursed by God for they would have obviously turned from the truth. They also warned that many ministers will appear as ministers of righteousness, but they are workers of Satan[31]. They appear to be of Christ because of their similarities to the Bible, but the deviation from the message of scripture proves they are not of God. The church had to know what true doctrine was and be on guard against subtle shifts away from the truth that would lead into pagan ideas. The church was even warned many would preach Jesus, but it would be another Jesus than what has been revealed through the scripture[32]. The Bible warns that false teachers will have their own Jesus, Holy Spirit, and gospel[33]. So even though there will be many similarities to the scripture in false religions, they are still contrary to God and His word.

If this has been a problem between the time of Jesus' life and our modern era, there should be no doubt that pagan religions would adopt from the scriptures during the Old Testament era. Pagan cultures adopt biblical accounts and integrate them into mythological stories. They also adopt numbers, names, and other significant symbolisms into their religious beliefs as well. This should not be a concern for when a pagan religion sees something deemed to be of significance, it is integrated into that belief system. When similarities are integrated into pagan religions, this also becomes a tool for drawing new converts which may also explain why so many Jews were lured into idolatry in the Old Testament. If they stood upon the word, they would not have fallen. If we stand on the word, we will not be lured into the false religion that the Bible says will cause the church to depart from the faith in the last days.

So hopefully you can see that similarities do not indicate plagiarism in the Bible, but indicate the practices of pagan religions to mimic scriptural beliefs as we even see today. Symbolism in the Bible is a powerful testimony of God's providence as it reveals His plan through events both past and future. Let us take a moment to look at some of the examples of symbolism that testify of God's glory and foreknowledge.

## The Foreshadow of Christ

According to Hebrews chapter 10, the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to Christ and the redemption of His sacrifice on the cross. The Bible clearly states that these Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow of what was to come and was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Once Jesus atoned for sin, purchased our redemption, and reconciled us to God, there was no longer a need for the symbolic sacrifices given in the Law. Jesus did not do away with the Law, but fulfilled it[34] through His life, crucifixion and resurrection. Many of the symbolisms in the Old Testament were sealed from man's understanding until they were revealed in the New Testament through Christ. This is explained in **Daniel 12:9-10**

> 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.
>
> 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

Daniel was considered the wisest man in Babylon and he was used greatly by God to testify of God's ways in his life and in the future. The Bible testifies to the wisdom of Daniel and even states that he had the Spirit of Wisdom from God. Even though the Bible foretells that the wise shall understand these things, it was hidden from Daniel's understanding. Many of the mysteries could not be understood until we were given the key of knowledge which comes through Jesus Christ. Look at **Romans 16:25-26**

> 25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,
>
> 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

True wisdom comes through Christ and we are promised that the wise shall understand but none of the wicked shall understand. We are all viewing the mystery through the wickedness of the flesh until we receive the Spirit of wisdom when we receive Christ and abide in Him. The world in its wisdom does not understand the wisdom of God but it is foolishness to them; however, to those of us being saved, the wisdom of the message preached is the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-21). What was veiled in the Old Testament is made known through Jesus Christ for He is the key of knowledge and this is

only understood through those who have the Holy Spirit[35]. God's wisdom is only given to those born into the Spirit[36] as a new creation[37]. So we not only receive wisdom through Christ, but through Him we are made to know all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Look now at **Matthew 13:10-12**

> 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
>
> 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
>
> 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

The mysteries of the kingdom are no longer mysteries to those who are made to know the truth. Without the Spirit of God, the natural man cannot understand spiritual things God has revealed in the scriptures[38]. This is why those without the Spirit have such diverse interpretations of the Bible and confusion of doctrine. The scripture states that there are no private interpretations of God's word[39]; therefore, if we study the word, we will rightly divide the truth[40] and understand all the mysteries of God. This is why we can study the scriptures and come to the same conclusion as the faithful teachers of God's word discovered long before us. When men deviate from the word or bring in outside influences, new doctrines emerge that conflicts with scripture; however, when scripture is the sole source of doctrine, those who study the whole word of God consistently come to the same conclusions even without collaborating their doctrines.

When man refuses to receive the truth, the Bible says that God gives him over to the deception he has chosen[41]. Those who receive the truth and apply it to their lives will receive more for God gives to those who have, and takes from those who have not. Those who have are those who have the Holy Spirit within them and hold to the word, while those who have not have rejected the word either through apathy or rebellion.

Consider the wise men who arrived at Jerusalem to celebrate the birth of Christ. Contrary to common belief, it was not three wise men, it was three types of gifts

they brought to honor Christ. We do not know how many made the long journey from Babylon to Bethlehem, but it was certainly more than three. The three gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) were symbolic of the life of Christ. Gold of course refers to royalty to honor Him as King. Frankincense was used as incense and the Bible uses the odors of incense as a symbol of the prayers of the saints. This is the Babylonian's acknowledgment to His divinity as God in the flesh and worthy of our adoration. Myrrh was a costly spice used to prepare the dead for burial, thus symbolizing His death. Clearly these men understood the Old Testament's teaching that Christ would die as a ransom for mankind.

Why did the Magi of Babylon recognize the birth of Christ from so far away? How would they have known when to look for Him? These rulers came from the East in the region of Babylon where Israel was taken captive more than 500 years earlier. Daniel was a captive from Israel, but he was exalted as a ruler in Babylon and was the chief governor over the wise men[42]. Daniel never left Babylon but God used him to foretell many of the future events that would affect Israel – including when the Messiah would arrive and present Himself to Israel. Look at **Daniel 9:24-25**

> 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.
> 25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

This is a very significant prophecy for it instructs Israel as to the exact time to expect their Messiah. The Bible often refers to a seven year period as a week (see Genesis 29:27). This prophecy given to Daniel is stating that when the command is issued that fulfills the promise to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls, the countdown to the Messiah begins and will occur in exactly 490 years (seventy years or weeks times seven). Now look at **Ezra 6:14**

> And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

According to scripture, three kings issued decrees to fulfill this prophecy. The ultimate fulfillment was the command of Artaxerxes when he commissioned Nehemiah to finish the task by building the walls of Jerusalem. This was indeed in troublous times for many enemies tried to stop the work, but the people built with one hand and held a weapon in the other[43]. From the command of Artaxerxes to the triumphant entry where Jesus presented Himself as the King of Israel was 490 years. This is an exact fulfillment of the prophecy given to Daniel.

In his book 'The Coming Prince', Sir Robert Anderson calculated the years from Artaxerxes through known historical dates to find when 490 years would expire. A Roman mathematician named Ptolemy provided much of the calculations for this work. Ptolemy used ancient writings that pinpointed historic events using the alignment of planets and stars and calculated their movements based on their known patterns. Ptolemy used this to calculate the reign of kings in antiquity. With surprising accuracy, Ptolemy dated Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes and the remaining world leaders down to Alexander the Great. Sir Robert Anderson took this timeline and applied it to the 360 day calendar that was used throughout the scripture and found that Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem was exactly 490 years after the final decree of Artaxerxes. Anderson was not alone in his conclusion, for in 190 AD, one of the early church fathers named Julius Africanus said:

> It is by calculating from Artaxerxes, therefore, up to the time of Christ that the seventy weeks are made up, according to the numeration of the Jews. For from Nehemiah, who was dispatched by Artaxerxes to build Jerusalem in the 115th year of the Persian empire, and the 4th year of the 83rd Olympiad, and the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes himself.

The promise given to Israel in the Old Testament was that their Messiah would come to them, lowly and riding on a foal[44]. Jesus rode into Jerusalem and mourned over the city as described in **Matthew 23:37-38**

> 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!
>
> 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Also look at Jesus' words in **Luke 19:41-42**

> 41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
> 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

The Lord fully foretold when the Christ would appear in Jerusalem and even explained how He would arrive, yet they still did not recognize the hand of God and rejected their Messiah. The Babylonians counted down and responded to the Savior. The Shepherds testified of the message delivered by the angels at His birth[45]. Two prophets testified to His divinity when He was brought to the temple for dedication[46]. Jesus affirmed His word and revealed His divinity through many signs and miracles. The crowds heard the voice of God when He was baptized by John as the Father said, "This is My beloved Son". Yet for all this, the leaders tried to destroy Him at his birth, rejected His teaching, persecuted Him relentlessly, threaten to ostracize anyone who acknowledged Him as Christ from Jewish culture and worship, and ultimately crucified Him.

The evidence testified of His glory from the Old Testament to the New and His own words and works revealed His salvation, yet the world rejected Him. They refused to see even in the midst of a cloud of witnesses. For this reason, we should not be surprised when men reject Him in spite of mountains of evidence. Evidence may affirm our confidence, but evidence will not turn the heart to the Lord. The gospel must remain the focus and we must realize that the masses will reject the gospel in spite of any amount of evidence. Jesus plainly stated this in **Matthew 7:13-14**

> 13 Enter ye in at the strait (difficult) gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
> 14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Evangelism is our call to direct others to the narrow gate, but we cannot force them to enter it. The flesh is drawn by the wide gate for it promises the things of the world, the pride of accomplishment, and gratification, but the Spirit calls us to die to ourselves and enter the narrow gate so that we pass from death into life. Jesus is that gate and through Him we are born into the Spirit and find life. Just as few recognized Jesus in Israel in spite of many witnesses, few will recognize

Him in our culture in spite of anything we can prove or provide as a testimony. Even so, our commission given by Jesus is to reach out with the truth and leave the results to Him.

## Symbolism in the Feast Days

There were seven feast days given in the Law of Moses which the children of Israel were commanded to keep. On the surface it would seem odd to command a nation to keep feast days as a requirement of the Law, but when we observe them in the light of the New Testament we see that they were a shadow of things to come. The following feast days were given to Israel:

### Passover

Passover was a feast to remember the day when Israel was delivered from the bondage of slavery and was to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month (Nisan). The angel of God passed through the land and struck down every firstborn male as a final judgment against Pharaoh so that he would submit to God and let Israel go free. A Passover lamb was killed and the blood was posted on the upper door and two doorposts. When the angel came through, it passed over the houses with the blood applied to the doorposts. This was a symbol of the payment of sin through Jesus. He is the door and the blood on the doorposts was the symbol of the cross. When we receive God's provision of salvation, judgment for sins is passed over and we are not held in account for our sins.

### Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the next day on the fifteenth of Nisan. Unleavened refers to bread that has no yeast so that it cannot rise. Jesus often referred to false teaching as leaven and the apostles warned the church not to allow sin to go unchecked in the church "for a little leaven, leavens the whole lump". In other words, one man's sin can affect the whole church. The feast of Unleavened Bread was to be celebrated for seven days.

### First Fruits

The feast of First Fruits was to be celebrated the day after the Sabbath during the feast of Unleavened Bread. On this day, the bread was presented as a wave offering before God. This pointed to the resurrection of Christ who is called the first fruits of those who were raised from the dead[47]. In the Law, the priest would wave a sheave of grain and then offer a lamb without blemish. Jesus also

fulfilled the wave offering for He was the bread of life and He was the lamb without blemish.

**Pentecost (Feast of Weeks)**
This feast was not on a specific date, but was to be celebrated exactly 50 days after the First Fruits celebration. During Pentecost, every male had to present themselves before the Lord along with a wave offering of the bread made from the first fruits. This pointed to the day of Pentecost when the disciples were gathered in the upper room awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit. They were created as a new creation by the first fruits (which was Christ). Jesus was the first fruits and because of Him the disciples were in the will of God.

**Trumpets**
The Feast of Trumpets was to be celebrated on the first day of the seventh month. The people were instructed to blow the shofar (or ram's horn) as a memorial. It was a call of God's people to be set apart for Himself and to remember their redemption. As Christians we know that we await the trumpet of God when our final redemption will be announced[48]. It is also foretold that the last trumpet to be sounded in Revelation is a declaration that all the kingdoms of this world will be set apart for God. Look at **Revelation 11:**

> 15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

**Day of Atonement**
The Day of Atonement was a feast to be celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month (the month Ethanaim). On this day the high priest had to be dressed in white linen and be thoroughly washed. He would then enter into the Holy of Holies and atone for the sins of the people by sprinkling the blood of the lamb on the Mercy Seat and Altar. This also points to our redemption in Christ who is our High Priest forever[49] and has entered the Holy of Holies once, for all to atone for our sins[50].

**Tabernacles**
The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and was celebrated for seven days. Every Israelite was to live in a tabernacle (or booth) as a remembrance of God bringing them out of bondage

and causing them to live in booths apart from the culture that enslaved them while they journeyed to the Promised Land. God led His people through the wilderness and covered them by a cloud by day and lighted their way with fire by night. As the redeemed of the Lord, we are called to live separated from the sinful culture around us as we journey to our eternal promise as well. Ultimately this will be fulfilled when we see the New Kingdom and Jesus dwells among us. Just as God journeyed with His people in the cloud, the Spirit dwells with us as we wander through the wilderness of the world. We had a foreshadow of this being fulfilled when Jesus was born, but will fully realize it when all things are fulfilled. Look at **John 1:14**

> And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The word ‘dwelt’ is the Greek word ‘skenoo’ (pronounced skay-no'-o), which means ‘to fix a tabernacle’. So literally, the word was God (John 1:1) and the word became flesh and fixed His tabernacle among us. In the end, we have the promise that He will dwell again among us, but at that time His kingdom will not end.

## The Seven Feast Days and New Birth

A very interesting observation was made by Zola Levitt in his booklet entitled ‘The Seven Feasts of Israel’. He observed that the feast days coincided with the development of a child in the womb. He interviewed a Pediatrician without letting her know what information he was after and asked about what happens on each number of days from conception. The times he put forth were the number of days given in the feasts but did not share his reasons until after the interview.

The average pregnancy is 280 days and is counted from the first day of the menstrual cycle prior to conception. On the fourteenth day of the first month the egg appears (which coincides with the Passover). Fertilization must occur within 24 hours or the egg will pass on (which coincides with Unleavened Bread which must be celebrated the next day).

The next step in the development life is for the egg to pass down the tube into the uterus. This can take anywhere between two and six days. Ironically, the next feast day is not a set date. It can be anywhere between two and six days after Unleavened Bread depending on what day the next Sabbath arrives. This step

coincides perfectly with the feast of the First Fruits. The egg implants and begins to grow – just as the feast of First Fruits celebrates the new planting as the people look ahead to the coming harvest.

The egg now goes into a slow development stage and fifty days after implanting it is developed into the fetus stage. Pentecost is fifty days after the feast of First Fruits. The next major milestone in the baby's development occurs on the first day of the seventh month. According to 'Williams Obstetrics', this is the time when the hearing has fully developed and the child in the womb can distinguish sounds. Interestingly enough, this is the exact time of the Feast of Trumpets.

On the second week of the seventh month, the fetus completes its transition in blood circulation. Now there is a change in the hemoglobin which allows the child to be able to carry oxygen in its blood and break its dependency on the mother. The Day of Atonement is the tenth day of the seventh month (which is in the second week). This is where the believer was atoned for by the blood of Christ so that man is no longer dependent on a priest or symbolic ordinance, but has the life of God within them through the Holy Spirit.

The final feast day (tabernacles) falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. As you are probably anticipating, there is a significant event in development on this date as well. On the fifteenth day, the lungs in a normal child are fully developed and can sustain life without difficulty if born early.

**Birth Pangs and the Restoration of all Things**

There is one step in development that Zola Levitt did not discuss but I believe the Bible addresses. If the plan of God is coming to maturity as a child in the womb as it coincides with the feast days, the birth must follow after development. As a child's delivery nears, birth pangs begin. The pangs start slowly and increase in intensity until the mother is overwhelmed with temporary grief. The birth is very traumatic but is followed by complete joy. The Bible compares the coming of the New Creation of God to the birth of a child in many places. Begin by looking at **Romans 8:22-23**

> 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.
>
> 23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit,* the redemption of our body.

This passage in Romans uses a metaphor that is easier understood when compared to the description that Jesus gave His disciples. Jesus compared the pain His disciples will endure to the pains of a woman in labor. The purpose of using this analogy was to both prepare His disciples to endure and to give them hope. What seems like great sorrow is actually the final steps in the fulfillment of God's plan which is leading to complete joy for His people. Consider

**Matthew 24:3-13**

> 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
>
> 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
>
> 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
>
> 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
>
> 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
>
> 8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.
>
> 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
>
> 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
>
> 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
>
> 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
>
> 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

The church must follow the doctrine of Jesus and prepare His people to endure tribulation with hope in His promises. This was taught only a few days before He was crucified. As the cross drew near, Jesus gave the most important instructions to His disciples. He stated that He did not tell them these things before because He was with them, but now that He is going away, it was time to give these instructions[51]. Jesus instructed His disciples concerning the fall of Jerusalem which would come to pass shortly, but He also provided instructions for future disciples who would have to endure the end times. In the book of John we see that Jesus began His final instructions with the command to 'let not your

heart be troubled' in order to prepare His disciples for His crucifixion and eminent departure. He again instructed them to 'let not your heart be troubled' in preparation for the revelation of their suffering and struggles in a world that would hate them for His name's sake[52].

Jesus encourages us that we should not allow our hearts to be troubled because His peace He leaves with us[53]. The Bible also instructs us that we should not be anxious for anything but through prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving we give our requests and concerns to God. Then the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding will guard our hearts and minds as we set our minds on the things God has given us through His word[54]. So it is through the lens of faith by the Spirit that we must view the troubles of life so that we see the hope being brought to us through these things. Jesus then compares these troubles with labor pangs. Look at **John 16:20-22**

> 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.
> 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.
> 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

The sorrow we may have to endure cannot overcome us if we walk by faith and understand the arriving plan of God. We endure through hope knowing that even though these are the beginnings of sorrows, we do not let our hearts become troubled but find joy in the hope He has revealed. Jesus instructed His disciples (of which we are a part) that we should not let our hearts be troubled even though the end times will produce more tribulation than that which was since the foundation of the world[55]. Tribulation cannot rob the Christian of joy for even though Jesus foretold that we would have to endure great persecution, He also explained that even in sorrow, no one can take our joy. Happiness is a temporary excitement that only occurs when something gives us pleasure or when we get what we want. Happiness fades very quickly and is dependent on new excitement and temporary pleasure. Joy on the other hand is not dependent on circumstances but it comes from the hope of God that does not disappoint for it

is given by the Holy Spirit to those who walk by faith[56]. Joy comes from the knowledge of hope as we endure with great expectation for the promises of God.

Even in tribulation the Christian has hope and we press on because of the joy set before us. We are instructed to remain focused on Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Just as He endured the cross for the hope set before Him, we also endure because of the hope set before us[57]. The hope before us can be found in **Revelation 21:3-5**

> 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.
> 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
> 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

So as the delivery of this promise draws near, we have been foretold that the world will have increasingly more pain as that day approaches like a woman who travails in labor. The book of Revelation reveals the increasing intensity of these pangs as the promise draws near for the believer. Regardless of the pain, when the promise comes, we will no longer remember the pain for the joy that has passed from hope to sight. Throughout the New Testament believers are encouraged to endure hardship and Jesus promised that those who live godly in this world will suffer persecution. The joy of God's blessings are not found in possessions or a life of pleasure that will all pass away; our blessing is the fellowship with God and the promises that we see through His word.

How could the prophets have known that God would tuck away this symbolism in the feast days seeing that it would not be known until this modern time? Truly all of creation testifies to the glory of God.

## Symbolism in Old Testament Names

In the book 'Cosmic Codes', Chuck Missler makes an amazing observation. This book has an interesting study on the names of the generations of Adam. Many times in the scripture you see that the name given to a child is prophetic. In the genealogy from Adam to Noah we see this also. Here is the Hebrew

interpretation of the meaning of the names from Adam to Noah:

Hebrew / English translation:
Adam - Man
Seth - Appointed
Enosh - Mortal
Kenan - Sorrow
Mahalalel - The Blessed God
Jared - Shall come down
Enoch - Teaching
Methuselah - His death shall bring
Lamech - Despairing
Noah - Rest, or comfort.

If you read the meanings as a sentence, you get:

Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (and) His death shall bring (the) despairing (to) rest.

Or as 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 states it:

> 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
> 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

**Matthew 11:28** adds to the completion of this testimony:

> Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Through Adam, we all suffer and are appointed to death, but through Christ we are made alive and the door is open for us to enter into God's rest. So we can see that the names given to the generations leading up to the flood were a foreshadowing of the coming salvation through Christ. Likewise, the ark is also a symbol of salvation in Christ. God called many to deliverance, but only eight souls responded and entered the ark. These were delivered from the judgment of God that punished the whole world. Those who believed God were saved by faith, not because of any merit on their part.

Genesis and the rest of the first five books of the Old Testament are called the

Torah. The Torah is considered to be sacred to the same Jewish priests, scribes and Pharisees that rejected Jesus and plotted His crucifixion. Yet many times their own sacred scriptures point directly to Christ. The generations of Adam lead directly to the ark and the meaning of the names point directly to Christ.

Since Jesus was not yet revealed, there is no way the prophets could have conspired to produce such an amazing testimony that pointed directly to Jesus Christ.

## Other Symbols

The Bible does indeed use many symbols throughout its pages and this should not be thought to be a cause of suspicion, but rather it serves as evidence to its divine origins as well as something that guides us to understand a connection to God's foreordained plan. The book of Revelation is filled with symbolism that is intended to point us back to truths revealed elsewhere in the Bible. For example, the Old Testament temple had twenty-four elders that tended to its service. This foretells of the twenty-four elders that will sit on the throne with Christ in Revelation 4:4.

In Exodus 27, God gives instructions to make the breastplate worn by the priest during their service for the people. Each of the tribes was given a different precious stone to represent that group of people. In Revelation all the stones that were on the breastplate are used to describe the glory for Israel in the New Jerusalem. Everything that the priest wore and performed in the temple was symbolic of something that would be revealed after Christ was made manifest. To them it was a command with an unknown meaning, but when Christ was revealed, we found that all the symbols pointed to Him and His works. We now know that these symbols were intended to testify as proof that He was in fact the Messiah – Savior of the world.

It has been claimed that the zodiac was originally a testimony to the works of God and some books go on to attempt to explain this. Since I haven't read these books I can't state anything for or against them; however, we do know that God stated that all creation testifies to His glory. If the sun spends three days in the Southern Cross in order for creation to proclaim God's foreordained plan, we should not see that as a problem. Clearly God hid this from mankind for 1500 years so that it was not integrated into worship. Astrology is a corruption much like any other form of idolatry. The testimony of creation should be viewed as

just that – a testimony. We as Christians see the proclamation of God throughout creation, but it only serves to encourage us. We do not worship creation or any of the hosts of heaven. Those who integrate creation into worship fall into the error of those who change the truth of God into a lie as described in **Romans 1:25**

> Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

The word 'creature' is the Greek word 'ktisis' which means creation. God never allows man to worship creation on any level and He has also warned that we never make anything that has an appearance like angels, God, any of the host of heaven, or any living creature to be integrate it into our worship[58]. Even something that symbolizes God or anything in heaven cannot be brought into our worship. If we bring in any likeness of anything in heaven, we have slipped into idolatry. There are those who say that images help them to focus on God, but in reality it is causing them to create a mental image of God after the likeness of creation rather than God. We cannot worship through an object and we cannot approach worship based on our own ideas. Worship must be according to God's design or it is no longer worship. Imagery that God forbids can never lead us into true worship.

Pagan religions have always done this and we have been instructed not to do as the heathen do in worship. This is also why so much biblical symbolism is found in pagan religions. Paganism takes the symbolism and makes it the object of worship. Sometimes it is a subtle shift, but when our focus in worship is drawn to something created, idolatry inevitably follows. It is amazing that when there is a similarity between the Bible and paganism, critics immediately accuse the Bible of borrowing from paganism even though all the evidence points in the other direction.

## Are there Pagan Symbols in the Bible?

Let us take a moment and consider the overall view of what we have been learning about paganism and the Bible. The critics of the Bible argue that the Bible borrowed from paganism, but the evidence clearly points to paganism as the plagiarists instead of the Bible. Consider the ideas communicated in pagan mythology. Pagans worshipped the sun and other events of nature and tried to explain them through mythology. Pagan mythology states that an evil god and a good god are warring for daylight. In the evening the evil god drives away the

sun and in the morning the good god wins the victory in this never ending battle for light. There are gods to explain lightening; gods to explain the moon; gods to explain birth; gods to explain plant growth and so on.

If the Bible borrowed from pagan myths, why are there no pagan gods in the Bible? There is not one account of a god of the moon, god of clouds, god of sun or any other event. Why is it that there is not one pagan god found in scripture? This is despite the fact that Israel fell into idolatry many times in their history and the fact that Israel came out of Egypt during the time of their pagan worship. Moses was trained in Pharaoh's house, yet he did not bring a single pagan god or ritual into the scriptures. Rather than seeing paganism being integrated, during the exodus, Israel is repeatedly warned to turn from those gods which have no power and no place in true worship. In fact, the Bible is the most unique book of all time and stands apart from all other religions.

In each case where the Bible is accused of borrowing from religions, we see that the evidence is fabricated or the Bible predates the emergence of similar ideas in paganism. We have already looked at many things through our examination of the claims of several bible critics, but we can also see this in Greek mythology. In high school I took a mythology class and was surprised to see stories similar to several biblical accounts. For example, in the Bible John criticizes the Pharisees for trusting that they were automatically in God's will because they were descendents of Abraham. John states the following in **Matthew 3:9**

> And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Greeks integrated something similar in mythology by saying that Pyrrha and Deukalion cast stones over their shoulders to create men to populate the earth. There are other examples of the Romans merging other religions (including biblical accounts) into mythology but this is not unexpected. This is spoken of in **Acts 17:16-21**

> 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.
>
> 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.
>
> 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some,

He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

These men who believed in gods and were given to idolatry also looked constantly for someone to tell them some new thing that they would then bring into their philosophies and religions which were then retold. The Areopagus was also called Mars Hill where the Romans believed that twelve gods held a trial to judge Mars for killing Halirrhothius, the son of Neptune. The court of twelve judges was called 'the Areopagus'. It was for their pagan beliefs that this was a sacred ground of judgment that caused the people to bring Paul to the Areopagus to be heard before those respected in the pagan Roman belief system.

So it isn't hard to see why so many Christian teachings made it into Roman mythology during the first century. These men who were always looking for something new picked out the parts of Christianity that they felt were interesting and brought it into mythology. Some received the message of the gospel and others held to their pagan beliefs. Those who turned to Christ were repeatedly urged by Paul to turn from idolatry and cling to Christ alone. Knowing this, it should not be hard to see how pagan mythology in antiquity borrowed the Jewish scriptures and slipped them into their own beliefs. We also know from scripture's testimony that the Jews who turned to idolatry also brought some scriptural ideas into their own pagan practices. This would affect paganism, but it does not detract from the scriptures themselves. The scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments stand against idolatry and confront and condemn those who attempt to serve God while practicing paganism.

The scriptures even confront the church that tried to integrate faith through Christ into the keeping of the Law of Moses. Once the Law was fulfilled by Jesus, it was a sin and denial of the faith to return again to the Law. Look at **Galatians 3:1-3**

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth,

crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

This was in response to Christians who were submitting themselves to be circumcised in order to be saved. After receiving salvation by faith, they were caught up in false teachings that told them that they must also keep the Old Testament Law in order to be saved. Circumcision was an act of the flesh that was a foreshadowing of faith in Christ. In the Old Testament, God's people entered the covenant of God's promise by having the flesh of their foreskins cut away as a symbolic ordinance. Jeremiah 4:4 explains to the Old Testament believers that true circumcision was of the heart even though the ordinance was carried out in the flesh. After Christ, the Christian is circumcised in the heart by the removing of the bondage of our flesh so that we enter into a new covenant by being born again into the Spirit. This is explained in **Colossians 2:11-15**

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

To bring in anything that points away from Christ is a form of idolatry and the Bible warned them that if they did so, they would have fallen from grace[59]. Each time man attempts to add to the doctrines of scripture, God rebukes the practice and points back to the right way. If God will not allow His people to return to the Law that came before Christ, He certainly will rebuke any attempt to return to pagan practices that He has called His people out of. So rather than seeing the Bible invaded by paganism, we see paganism borrowing from the Bible. The Lord has always protected His word but there is nothing to protect

paganism or maintain its consistency through the ages. Pagan religions can be shown to evolve and change over the centuries, but the Bible has not changed. The discovery of older manuscripts stands as a testimony that the word we have today is consistent with the word of God in antiquity. The same cannot be said about any pagan religion.

## *Equipping Ourselves to Answer Common Questions*

Not everyone who adopts the ideas of atheism is hostile to truth. Many have only heard the never-ending barrage of so-called evidences against the Bible and have never heard anyone give a reasonable answer. Some will be open to hearing the reason for our hope and will be truly interested in listening to answers that validate the scriptures. There have been many atheists who have come to faith in Christ when they were exposed to the truth. Several years ago I attended church with a man who was once a self-proclaimed atheist. His wife came to Christ and he was intrigued by the change in her life. He was a very analytical person and it took months for him to respond to the gospel. Before he was open to hearing the message of the cross, he had to work through many misconceptions. False information presented as facts became a hindrance to his ability to honestly look at the gospel. Once he studied and resolved these objections, the barrier was removed and he was open to hearing the word and soon surrendered his life to Christ.

This is one of the reasons behind this study. There are many who are blinded to the gospel because they have been taught for many years that atheism is based on facts and the Bible is only a manmade book of superstition and contradicts the facts. People often need to work through these things before they can honestly look at the salvation message given through Jesus. Not everyone will be willing to look at the truth and we should not attempt to force feed truth. There are those who sincerely think that evidence points away from God and there are those who look for something to contradict God so they have an excuse to not believe. We can’t make someone believe, but we can give them the option.

Another one of the motivating factors in tackling this topic is the infiltration of misconceptions within the church. The youth of today are being bombarded with secular humanism at school and through the media and the church has done almost nothing to counteract this. In fact, the church has added to the problem by attempting to merge secular humanism into Christianity by teaching things like the ‘Gap Theory’, ‘Theistic Evolution’, and ‘Progressive Evolution’. As youth are exposed to propaganda masquerading as science and the church does nothing to explain the relevance of the scriptures to the world around them, they are one step closer to disbelief. Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis made a very accurate point that Genesis is the foundation of the authority of God’s word. If we allow the younger generation to view the Bible as being unreliable in Genesis, we also undermine their ability to trust God’s word in salvation and morality. Jesus said

it well in **John 3:**

> 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you *of* heavenly things?

If we do not believe the Bible's teaching on the origins of creation, how can we believe the Bible in matters of salvation? Consider the ramifications of evolution in how we view sin. According to Genesis, man was created good and all of creation was very good. Man fell by choosing sin, curse is now upon all creation and man is in need of redemption. So man went from perfection to imperfection through sin, but is restored through Christ. According to evolution, man evolved from humble beginnings to a better, more efficient, and a more complex being. It all supposedly started by an imperfect cell that continues to evolve toward perfection. Man came from inferior beginnings and is climbing toward perfection. These two views are polar opposites. In evolution, man is rising toward goodness without God, but in scriptural creation, man was created good but fell from perfection. Man is only good through God as he is perfected by the work of the Holy Spirit given through Christ.

As we saw earlier, Jesus taught that we should not cast pearls before swine or else they will trample it and turn on you. When we present evidence to assist someone with objections and they begin to trample it, we can't force them to accept it. The pearls are the truths of the scripture and a swine is analogous for someone who has a desire to remain in the mire of sin and despises the treasures of God's truth. To question what is true is not unbiblical, but to reject what is true and cling to what we know is a lie is unbiblical. Consider this passage from **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**

> 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
> 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
> 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

God does not condemn those who have not seen the truth, but those who rejected the love of truth because their love is in unrighteousness. God gives each one what they choose. Those who love the lie will be given over to the lie, but those who receive the love of the truth will find Christ and salvation. We cannot see what God is doing in someone's heart so we should not assume that someone

who does not immediately respond to the gospel has rejected the truth. Outwardly we can see the evidence of rebellion when critics of the faith make a forceful effort to trample the truth and attack those who present it to them. In such cases we should continue to be a witness, but should not get into a battle of words and try to argue someone into heaven. It is God's role to harden or soften the heart.

Knowing this, we should equip ourselves with answers as the Bible instructs so that we can help others unload the burden of misconceptions and false beliefs so that they are willing to honestly look at the gospel message that calls them into salvation through Christ.

## Why is there Suffering in the World

The idea of suffering in the world is a common objection raised by critics of the Bible and has caused many Christians to struggle in the faith. I often hear questions like, "How could a loving God allow such suffering in the world". Surprisingly many Christians can't seem to answer this question and it has been the catalyst for some who once claimed to hold the faith to turn from it. An example of this is the life of Charles Templeton. Charles Templeton served for twenty-one years in Christian ministry. He had one of the largest churches in Toronto, conducted one of the most successful evangelistic circuits in the US and Canada, and was one of the main preachers in the newly formed Youth for Christ International where he rotated the pulpit with Billy Graham. The problem of suffering in the world perplexed Templeton when he read books by Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Bertrand Russell, Robert lngersoll, David Hume and Thomas Huxley. As these atheists presented questions about suffering, Templeton's doubts grew. Later Templeton summarized these doubts in his book, 'Farewell to God':

> Why does God's grand design require creatures with teeth designed to crush spines or rend flesh, claws fashioned to seize and tear, venom to paralyze, mouths to suck blood, coils to constrict and smother—even expandable jaws so that prey may be swallowed whole and alive? … Nature is in Tennyson's vivid phrase, "red in tooth and claw," and life is a carnival of blood. (Templeton, C., Farewell to God)

If we examine the testimony of Templeton, it becomes clear as to why the idea of suffering in the world would be such a problem. Templeton explained that he had many unresolved doubts and these issues continued to plague him over the

years until he abandoned the ministry, soon became an agnostic, and eventually an atheist. Templeton explains the root of his problem in this excerpt of his testimony:

> "I had never believed all that fundamentalists believe-the Genesis account of creation, for instance, or the monstrous evil of an endless hell. But now the entire fabric was coming apart [referring to his faith]."

This statement presents the root of the problem. Genesis is the foundation of Christianity and if you remove the foundations, the structure of faith cannot withstand the storms of life or attacks on our understanding. Templeton's faith was not in scripture, but in selective truth. He picked what he was to believe and rejected (or allegorized) what didn't fit his personal belief system. I once heard a man say that he only believes the words of Christ and nothing else. That is not possible, for Jesus pointed back to Genesis to establish that Adam and Eve were the beginning[60]. Jesus said that if a man does not believe the writings of Moses, he will not believe in Christ. Look at **John 5:46-47**

> 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.
> 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

The writings of Moses are the first five books of the Old Testament. By Templeton's own admission, he never believed Genesis; therefore, according to Jesus he cannot believe the New Testament gospel given through Christ. Jesus also quoted from many of the Old Testament prophets during His ministry. We can't believe Christ and disbelieve the scriptures He quoted from and affirmed as God's word. Picking and choosing which passages to accept is not biblical faith. In fact, it shifts the object of faith from believing God to trusting into our own ideology. Once we become the measurement of truth, truth will rise and fall based on what manipulates our understanding. The human mind can easily be deceived by well crafted arguments and unless there is a firm foundation that we return to in order to establish our way, truth will appear to be shifting sand that alters with the latest argument that sounds persuasive. Anyone who trusts in their own minds as though they have infallible power to understand is destined for deception. It is very easy to see why the fabric of Templeton's faith came unraveled for each belief is hanging by a thread unless the individual is founded upon a sure foundation.

When we reject any part of the scriptures, we have stepped outside of God's

wisdom and we have set ourselves up as the one who determines truth. We are now trusting in the flesh, which is corrupted by sin and weak against temptation. Even if someone spends their entire lives doing ministry, it profits nothing unless it is by faith out of a love for God[61]. Jesus made it clear that those who do not keep the word cannot say that they love Him[62] and the Lord stated that anyone who casts His word behind them does not have the right to claim to be a part of God's covenant[63]. Jesus even warned that many will call Him Lord without obeying the word, but these will have no foundation and will not stand when put to the test[64].

Many will preach the word, do good works and even do wonders but will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven because they do not know Jesus Christ[65]. People are drawn to ministry when they have a longing in their hearts to please God and have been affected by the gospel, but without receiving faith through the Spirit, it is a mere human desire and not a call of God. There are many who appear righteous outwardly, but inwardly they are filled with sin and hypocrisy[66]. Since the Bible tells of these things, it is not surprising that some who professed the faith and even preached it should turn from it and become atheists. The apostles noted this in their day when they stated that many went out from the church but did not remain because they were not truly in the faith. Their departure only makes their lack of knowing God manifest to the church[67]. Questions about suffering and other criticisms are a serious threat to the religious beliefs of those whose foundation is dependent on their own understanding in the flesh.

The Bible explains why there is suffering in the world throughout scripture. Any Christian who truly studies the scripture will have a grounded faith and will have understanding for the Bible promises that those who seek the Lord will understand all things[68]. One of the primary tools for seeking the Lord is the scriptures God has given to us. We can understand suffering when we look to God's word. Consider **Romans 8:18-23**

> 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
>
> 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation

of the sons of God.
20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,
21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.
23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

The word 'creature' is a reference to creation and is the same Greek word used in verse 22. Also look at these two passages:

**Romans 5:**12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
**1 Corinthians 15:**21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.
22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Bible states that creation was cursed for the sake of man. Rather than cursing man, God cursed the earth and removed the paradise that is only possible when man is in perfect harmony with God. The warning given to man when he was given the command not to eat of the tree was that in doing so, he would be subject to death. By mere disobedience man took himself from perfection to corruption. The issue at hand was not that there were mystical properties in the fruit, but that the commandment was a test so that man's faith could be proven through his obedience. The Bible says that an evil heart comes from unbelief and it is this unbelief that causes us to sin by departing from God[69]. For man, the curse of sin is death; however, the curse of creation directly affects man. Disease is the curse of creation, but this still affects man. Paradise was lost because of sin and man must now abide in a cursed world.

All of creation groans with pain awaiting the final redemption that we also wait for with patience and hope. Creation was made subject to the curse, not willingly, but because of the sin of man. We groan as we await our adoption and the redemption of our bodies, and creation also suffers as it awaits its final redemption. The pain of the curse is why there are diseases and suffering. The

curse is why animals have fangs, claws and teeth to devour. Nature did not adopt this willingly, but was made subject to these things by God's curse which eventually leads man back to hope through redemption. It was not this way from the beginning and it will not be cursed in the end. Look at **Isaiah 11:5-9**

> 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
>
> 6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.
>
> 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
>
> 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.
>
> 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

We are not free from suffering nor are we exempted from the pain caused by the curse given to creation; however, we are promised that the things we suffer now are not even comparable to the glory to be revealed. People who do not have the hope within them that is only found in Christ also groan to be free from the affects of sin, but they do not have the hope that gives us patience in tribulation[70]. Those without hope can only see despair in the sufferings of our world. A Christian who does not have a foundation in the word also does not have the hope that comes through the word of God. This is explained well in these passages:

> **Psalm 119:** 49 Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.
>
> 50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened [given life] me.
>
> **Psalm 119:**81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

Since Charles Templeton rejected the writings of Moses, he could not understand the cause of suffering and could not believe the promises given to us through Christ. Without hope in His word, there is no hope in this world. Suffering is not an unexplained phenomenon that contradicts the love of God; suffering causes man and creation to long for the Lord. Without holiness the world and all that is in it has been corrupt, but suffering causes us to become weary of corruption and

long for what is holy. The Bible tells us that suffering is part of the Christian life for Jesus said, “In this world you will have tribulation[71]”. The Bible also says that we rejoice in our sufferings[72] and the apostles comforted the church by saying, “We must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation[73]”. The Bible also tells us that God loves the righteous[74], strengthens us in our troubles[75] and that we are the apple of His eye[76]. If God loves the believer but does not exempt us from suffering, it should not be hard to understand how God can love the whole world but not exempt the world from the curse of sin.

We endure through hope knowing that even though we may suffer, when we receive the promise the past suffering will not even be worth comparing to the glory we will experience. As Christians we should understand our hope and be ready to give an answer to the reason for this hope to those who question us[77]. When a skeptic points to the suffering in the world, this is an evangelistic opportunity for we can use the groaning of creation to explain the hope of redemption in Christ.

## Why is The God of the Old Testament not the same as the God of the New Testament?

Let’s prelude the answer of this argument by examining the flaw in logic that most claims of contradiction fall into. The flaw of this argument is not unlike the majority of the misconceptions atheists have of the Bible. Atheists have dozens if not hundreds of items they claim are contradictions against the Bible. Of all the supposed contradictions, only a small handful actually requires examination. Most claims of contradictions are a lack of understanding of doctrine. The atheist tries to divide the scriptures and pit one passage against another, but the Christian understands that passages are intended to compliment each other or present additional information to deepen our understanding.

If you approach scripture with the knowledge that it is God who revealed His word to us through the apostles and prophets, then we understand that the entire Bible is meant to be studied as a whole revelation. We ‘rightly divide the word of truth’ by taking a passage from the scripture while keeping in view the context of the whole revelation. To take a passage out of its intended context or divide it

from the rest of the Bible is to mishandle the scripture. If my interpretation of a passage does not agree with the rest of scripture, then I have failed to obey the command to rightly divide the word. To take one passage and make it into a rival of another passage is scripture twisting. The critic of the Bible looks for passages to take out of context, but the student of the word always sees the harmony of the gospel.

An example that is often cited by atheists is the claim that there is a conflict between Paul and James. Look at this passage from **James 2:19-26**

> 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
> 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
> 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
> 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
> 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
> 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
> 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?
> 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Now look at what Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:8-10:**

> 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
> 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
> 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

James says that we are justified by works, but Paul's letter to the Ephesian church says that we are saved by grace through faith and not of works. Is this a conflict? It might appear to be a conflict to someone who is ignorant of the rest of scripture but in truth there is no conflict at all. Even this passage where Paul says that salvation is not by works, he also states that we are saved for good

works. Paul and James both point to good works as the evidence of salvation. The teaching of James is complimentary to what was instructed by Paul. In fact, it is very likely that he was attempting to clarify misunderstandings in the church based on what Paul wrote for James uses the same illustration Paul used to explain justification by faith in Romans 4. Paul uses Abraham's faith to explain how that man is credited with the righteousness of God by faith without having to earn righteousness by works.

One of the unfortunate realities of human nature is that mankind will attempt to justify himself by finding loopholes in the Bible. Even today we have problems with the 'easy believism' where people claim to believe Jesus is their savior, but do not have any desire to live a godly life but instead continue to live solely for the flesh. Paul criticizes this throughout his writings, but people still take one passage out of context and try to make the Bible fit their life in the flesh rather than conforming their life to Christ. James is addressing that very thing. James is confronting those who say they believe in God but show no evidence in their lives. James states that even the devils believe in God, but the evidence that we truly have faith is the works that come out in our lives. If there are no works that testify to our salvation, our faith is dead regardless of what we say we believe.

If Abraham said he believed God, but then refused to offer Isaac, his faith would have been dead for he would have acted in disobedience and remained in the flesh. Saying 'I believe' and then acting in disbelief means nothing. Abraham was justified when he stepped out in faith to put his trust in God. The story of Rahab the harlot was also used as an example of faith. This sinful woman became justified when she turned to obedience and was protected by God when Jericho was judged and destroyed. The writings of Paul attest to this very thing as Paul warns that faith does not allow us to walk in our own ways. James is not presenting anything different than what Paul and the other apostles have stated in their writings, but he has worded it in a way that is more confrontational to the concept of easy believism. Also in Romans, Paul clarifies that those who sought justification through the rules of the law missed faith in Christ. According to Romans 9, the apostles confronted the idea that salvation could be found by trying to keep the works of the law for this is merely a human effort. Those who sought to justify themselves by works stumbled over faith in Christ.

There are three concepts being addressed. First, the apostles confronted those who thought they could merit salvation. Even the works mentioned by James is not presented as a merit to salvation, but the evidence of our faith and salvation.

Those who thought they could merit salvation through the law stumbled over grace for they could not accept the gift of God which requires no human effort. Second, the apostles confronted the idea that we could live any way we wanted and claim that we walk in the light of truth. If we belong to Christ, the evidence of Christ will be manifest in our lives by our works and actions. The third point made was that true salvation is trusting in Christ to receive the gift offered freely by faith.

Works aren't the things we do to merit favor from God, it is what God is doing through us and is the evidence of salvation. Faith is made evident by holiness and good works in our lives. This is illustrated in the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5 (which was written by Paul). Paul writes that godly men must show a pattern of good works (Titus 2:7), that God purifies people for Himself who are zealous for good works (Titus 2:14), instructs the faithful to be careful to maintain good works (Titus 3:8), and instructs the leaders to show love in order to stir up the desire of others to do good works (Hebrews 10:24). The message is that good works cannot merit grace for grace is the unmerited favor of God; however, anyone who has the Spirit of God will have good works that testify that their faith is true. Living faith is from God and produces good works, but dead faith is simply a belief system that produces nothing of God.

From this example it should not be hard to see that many supposed contradictions are actually a lack of understanding. Those who do not know Christ cannot fully understand doctrine for the scriptures are spiritually discerned[78] by the teaching of the Holy Spirit given to us[79] when we trust in Christ. Without the Spirit, man is limited for all things are interpreted through the mind rooted in the flesh. The flesh cannot grasp the spiritual principles of God.

The claim that God is different in the Old and New Testaments falls into this same line of reasoning. Through diligently studying the scriptures we can easily understand the reasons why God dealt differently with the Old Testament saints than He does in the New Testament. The primary reason should be apparent simply by identifying what differentiates us from the saints of Old. Obviously Jesus Christ is the gateway between the Old and New Testaments and through Him we now have the ability to know God on a personal level. This was not possible in the Old Testament for sin was the barrier between God and man.

To walk into the Holy of Holies was a fearful thing in the time before Christ. The Holy of Holies is the center of the temple and it is symbolic of approaching God. The mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant was where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled to atone for the previous year's sins. According to Hebrews 10, the atonement for sin performed by the priests was only a ritual that pointed to Christ and the sins were not truly removed until after His crucifixion where the debt was paid. The veil of the temple separated the common man from ever beholding the holiest place in the temple, but when Jesus died, the veil was torn from top to bottom[80]. This indicates that something had changed. God had removed the veil that prevented us from approaching God because our sin had now been atoned for and His imputed righteousness enabled those who put their faith in Christ to stand in the presence of a holy God.

This was one of the main differences between how God dealt with His people before Christ and how God deals with us today. We now have a perfect mediator between God and man through our savior Jesus Christ[81]. Jesus is also our advocate when we sin[82]. An advocate is a legal representative. When someone stands before a court, a lawyer represents them as an advocate to plead their case before a judge. Jesus is our advocate who pleads on our behalf. We have an advocate who has already satisfied the demand for justice by paying for our sin, so when He pleads our case, we obtain mercy and not judgment for our crimes against God's holiness.

The priest in the Old Testament had no advocate but had to abide by a series of requirements that created fear so they understood that they were not righteous and had no right to stand before God. The blood and priestly garments stood between the priest and the mercy seat to reveal to the priest that they were not in a position to atone for their own sin, much less the sins of the people. A priest who was also in need of redemption should have been fearful for how can a man atone for the people when he needed mercy for himself. The things the priest wore pointed directly to Christ, so it was a testimony that they were carrying out this requirement of the Law, but the atonement would come from someone other than themselves.

God indeed demonstrated more fear in the Old Testament than He does today. God has not changed nor has He ceased to judge man's sin; however, Jesus was judged in the place of those who put their trust in Him. God is still angry at sin

and sin still becomes a barrier in our spiritual lives until we repent and are forgiven[83]. In the Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit was not yet given to man and therefore all restraint had to come from without for it is the Spirit that restrains us from within so we do not sin. This is explained in **1 John 3:**

> 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The 'seed' is the Holy Spirit that is given to us. The Spirit did not indwell man until after Christ's resurrection. Look at **John 7:**

> 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Holy Ghost is how the King James Version translates the name 'Holy Spirit'. Before Jesus completed His work to give us redemption and create within us the new man born after the Spirit, the Law was only known by what was written and its harsh enforcement. We have always been commanded to hide the word of God in our heart by studying, but now we have our understanding of the Law by the Holy Spirit. Look at **Romans 7:**

> 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

Before Jesus, the letter of the law was the enforcement of morality and righteousness. The Bible says that the letter of the law kills, but it is the Spirit that gave life[84]. The Old Testament saints were not redeemed by animal sacrifices and did not have the Holy Spirit within them. The new birth where we become a new creation is given through the Holy Spirit and therefore, was not available until after Christ. Without internal restraints, fear was the enforcement of the Law. We know that strict enforcement of the law was necessary, for even with the harshness of the law, God's people still wandered into harmful practices. Israel constantly drifted into idolatry which caused lawlessness to abound. Israel even adopted the pagan practices of offering their children up as sacrifices[85]. It was these sacrifices that preceded God's judgment where He drove them out of their Promised Land.

The pagan cultures around Israel made a practice of these things and the Law with its fearful enforcement was the only restraining factor in the land. Even with this, Israel continued to commit abominations, but the Law served as a restraint for many of the people and through the judgment of God, many were returned back to the Lord. God used judgment and hardship to alert His people that they were going outside of the right way. All these judgments were intended to show the consequences of moral depravity and cause those who would listen to return to the Lord[86]. Because there was no Holy Spirit within man, God often affirmed righteousness with prosperity and disciplined sin with judgment. Even with the outward restraints God used, the people were still drawn away, so it is clear that this was necessary in the Old Testament times. But this changed when the Holy Spirit was given. Look at **Romans 2:13-16**

> 13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.
>
> 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
>
> 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)
>
> 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Do not misunderstand this passage, but take it in context with the book of Romans. This is not saying that man determines his own law. The introduction of this teaching is, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”. I might add that this teaching of Paul wholly agrees with the passage in James we looked at earlier. So we can see that Paul and James are in full agreement on works and justification. The law is not being changed, nor is it being determined by man’s own heart or intellect. What this passage is teaching is that the Gentiles (those raised outside of the Jewish law and religious system) are keeping the law, not because of an outward system that conforms them to a religion, but an inward restraint written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

This is why God deals differently with the New Testament church than He dealt with Israel in the Old Testament. Once the Holy Spirit is within us, we are a new creation, born of the Spirit and now the word of God is written on our hearts and we obey it, not because of outward rules, but because we are walking in the

Spirit and His Spirit within us guides us into all truth[87]. The truth has not changed, but how we live and who we are in Christ has changed. This understanding is communicated throughout the New Testament. There are a number of scriptures we must examine to fully understand this New Testament principle. Look at **1 Peter 1:**

> 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Add to this **John 3:5-7**

> 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
> 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
> 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Notice that Peter explains that we are born through the word of God. Faith comes by hearing the word of God and even though we are keeping the law by being a law unto ourselves, it is not a new law, but a new way of governing ourselves into that law. While in the flesh, we live after the flesh. The flesh is restrained by fear of consequences and cultural norms that pressure people into conformity (or at least the appearance of conformity). As the culture shifts, so does morality. There are things that were acceptable thirty years ago that are abhorred today. Look at how our culture views sexism, racism, and homosexuality today as compared to thirty years ago. Look at the acceptance of abortion and sexual conduct and compare that to thirty years ago. Cultural morality is based on popular opinion and it shifts with the ideas of the culture whether that be right or wrong. Restraint is only applied through cultural law and pressures.

Once someone comes to Christ, the focus changes from outward restraints to inward restraints. Once we are born as a new creation, the old person we were is crucified with Christ and a new man is born of God by the Spirit. Now the restraint is our desire to live according to the Spirit. As we hear the word of God, it is taken to heart, applied to our heart and written on our heart. Faith is by the word of God so the law in our heart is by hearing and believing the word of God and acting upon our new spiritual nature. We now do, by nature (our new nature), the things contained in the law but could not be fully applied because of our sinful hearts born after the flesh. Once we experience that new birth,

everything changes. Look at **2 Corinthians 5:17-18a**

> [17] Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
>
> [18] And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ

We are no longer trying to reform our lives; we have a new life in Christ. Before faith in Christ, even when we attempted to live right, our flesh overcame our desires and we sinned willingly while attempting to justify ourselves by deeds or upholding an imaginary moral standard. How is it that everyone will tell you that they are a good person even if they clearly do bad things? Even with good intentions, the flesh cannot rise above its natural corruption. But when we are born again by the Spirit, we now have the power to overcome the flesh because we have a new nature and the Spirit to guide us into a new walk. Look at **1 John 5:4-5, 18**

> [4] For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.
>
> [5] Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?
>
> **…**
>
> [18] We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

Even though we live in a body of flesh and the Bible warns that the flesh will continuously rise up and war against our minds to try to draw us back into bondage[88], through the Spirit we overcome the world. Our flesh is part of the world for sin is in our flesh[89]. That which is Spirit does not sin and cannot sin, but our flesh can indeed sin and will war against us to draw us back into sin. But the Bible promises that if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh[90].

So we can see that in the Old Testament, outward restraint was the only guide to God's people. When the cultural norm of morality shifted to that which was immoral, God used harsh means to change the culture. God also drove immoral cultures away from His people and even destroyed those who were morally bankrupt so that they would not destroy the morality of His people. Now we

have the Holy Spirit within us that convicts us of sin and guides us into the truth of God. By our new nature born of the Spirit we naturally do what is written in the law so there is no need to judge the entire culture. When God's people choose to walk according to the flesh, God still uses difficulties to chasten us so that we look again to the right way, but now it is a Father correcting a child who is loved, not a judge punishing the wicked.

## Why do the Gospels differ on the Resurrection?

The variations of the eyewitness accounts of the Resurrection of Christ are often cited as contradictions, but this argument should be easily dispelled if we just take a moment to think about what is being communicated. Just as we saw earlier, doctrine spread throughout scripture is not intended to be taken out of the context of the scripture as a whole and we must also use this line of reasoning when looking at the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection. This applies to the resurrection or any of the events of Jesus' life. If you have four people describing the same event, why should it be thought to be a contradiction if each gives details that one or more of the others do not mention? If one disciple said that Jesus was resurrected the third day and the next said the fourth day, then we would have a contradiction; however, if one account gives details that add to the picture, this is not a contradiction at all.

Think for a moment about the criminals crucified with Jesus. In Matthew 27:38-44 the priests were mocking Jesus and saying, "He could save others, but cannot save Himself". They challenged Him to prove that He was the son of God by coming down off the cross and then they will believe Him. The book of Matthew states that the thieves crucified with Him cast the same words at Him. Luke gives another account from testimonies of other eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Luke was not an eyewitness. He interviewed a large number of witnesses and compiled their testimonies into a letter sent to Theophilus detailing the life of Jesus which we now call the book of Luke. Historically we know that Theophilus was an officer in the emperor's court at Rome, so it is likely that the books of Luke and Acts were presented as testimonies for the apostle Paul's trial when he was imprisoned around 69 AD. Look at his account of the crucifixion in **Luke 23:39-43**

> 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
>
> 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God,

seeing thou art in the same condemnation?
41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.
42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Is this contradicting what Matthew saw and wrote? Or could this be more than one eyewitness account which adds details to what Matthew stated? Roman guards prevented anyone from approaching the cross without the governor's approval, but large crowds were close enough to witness the execution. The execution was intended to be a public spectacle in order to deter 'would be' offenders. Matthew was obviously close enough to hear the thief who mocked Jesus but not close enough to hear the words of the thief on the cross on the other side of Jesus. Other disciples were close enough to hear the words of the second thief and Luke compiled both of their testimonies into his gospel. I see no reason for the Christian to be disturbed by these two accounts. Both agree on the details even if both could not hear the thieves.

The same argument applies to Jesus' trial when Barabbas was released. Matthew calls Barabbas a notable prisoner. Mark 15:7 says that Barabbas was an insurrectionist who committed murder, but John 18:40 states that he was a robber. I suppose it could be argued that this was a contradiction if you could make the argument that no murderer would ever be called a robber. Is it possible that someone who was trying to raise an insurrection against Roman occupation to commit murder and steal from those he considered the enemy? Of course he would. The addition of details is not to contradict, but to supplement what has already been stated. We can also understand the events around the resurrection by using simple logic and reasoning. Look at one account that is touted as a contradiction by atheists concerning the stone rolling away as described in these three passages:

**Matthew 28:**2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

**Mark 16:**3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

**Luke 24:**2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

**John 20:**1 The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Clearly Mark, Luke and John use the same description, but Matthew adds the actual event where the stone was rolled away. Matthew does not say that Mary and Martha witness the stone being rolled back, he explains the event that took place beforehand in order to explain why Mary and Martha found the tomb already opened. Nothing stated by Matthew disagrees with the other eyewitness accounts. Matthew explained the events of the soldiers and their interaction with the priests after the resurrection. This addition of information is a valuable part of the gospel for Matthew's knowledge of the testimony of the soldiers informs us of things we would not have otherwise discovered.

Let's look at another example. Matthew above states that the angel of the Lord rolled the stone away and sat on it. This is what was seen by the soldiers. Mark 16:5 states that the women who first visited the tomb saw a man in white apparel inside the tomb. Are these contradicting testimonies? Luke 24 states that those at the tomb found two men in white clothing. Does that agree or disagree with Matthew and Mark? Could there have been one angel on the stone and one in the tomb and at one point both stood by them to testify that Jesus had risen?

If you take the time to examine these testimonies it should be obvious that they could be put into a timeline to explain a chain of events from the soldiers witnessing the opening of the tomb to the disciples seeing Jesus in their midst. The Bible tells us that there were several trips to the tombs by Mary, Martha, the disciples and others. If you try to cram every event into one visit, it would appear to be contradictory, but then again, one trip to the tomb is contradicted by the Bible. If we realize that all four gospel accounts are describing various details given by many people as they ran excitedly to and from the tomb and brought others to see, nothing falls out of place. None of these accounts dispute each other; they add missing details to paint a fuller picture of that glorious

resurrection day.

## Who created the Creator?

Richard Dawkins makes it clear that when viewing the evidence, it is not an option to consider a Creator. Any number of scenarios are acceptable including believing in a multiverse where any number of universes coexist in which alternative images of ourselves also exist, but considering the option that we are created by God is not even allowed into the equation. Consider this quote from Dawkins:

> The natural temptation is to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself. In the case of a man-made artefact such as a watch, the designer really was an intelligent engineer. It is tempting to apply the same logic to an eye or a wing, a spider or a person. The temptation is a false one, because the designer hypothesis immediately raises the larger problem of who designed the designer. The whole problem we started out with was the problem of explaining statistical improbability. It is obviously no solution to postulate something even more improbable. We need a 'crane', not a 'skyhook', for only a crane can do the business of working up gradually and plausibly from simplicity to otherwise improbable complexity. (The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins)

Dawkins also states, "We can now safely say that the illusion of design in living creatures is just that – an illusion". He argues this case by presenting a statistical scenario that he conjured up and presented as scientific evidence. The musings of the mind of an atheist do not qualify as evidence, doesn't eliminate creation from the record, and surely doesn't safely remove the possibility of design. Dawkins adopts the mindset of Charles Darwin. If you are inspired to read 'The Origin of the Species', do so with an observant mind. While he presents a very creative argument that sounds like it could be reasonable if the facts agreed, he also acknowledges that the facts don't agree. Darwin spends page after page in each chapter presenting a long, drawn out argument to explain away the evidence that contradicts his theory and explain why there is no evidence to support his theory. Evolution survives by pressuring others to conform to group think and by using smoke and mirrors to give the illusion that it has a factual basis.

The roots of this movement acknowledge that facts are either lacking or contradictory, but craft deceitful arguments to give the illusion of truth while

drawing attention away from evidence. Truth is not determined by persuasive sounding arguments; truth is either based on fact or it is not truth. Charles Darwin presents three main points in almost every chapter of his book. He presents his idea of origins, he follows up by explaining why we should not be concerned by a lack of evidence, and finally he explains why that even though his theory contradicts the facts we should not rely on observable science. In other words, he explains away the observable facts, explains away the lack of evidence and attempts to convince the reader that his theory should be more persuasive than what we see or don't see. The whole weight of evolution is carried solely by his ability to persuade. The same holds true in evolutionary science today. Creation does not dispute the evidence. If anything, evolution disputes the evidence and only allows exhibits that can be forced into the evolutionary model. Any contradictory evidence is excluded as unreliable. The weight of every argument is carried on the shoulders of assumptions and not evidence.

Let's think for a moment about the problem of 'who created the Creator'. According to Dawkins, the perfectly engineered designs found throughout nature can't be attributed to a Creator (or designer) solely for the reason that, in Dawkins ideology, the existence of a Creator is 'highly improbable', but a crane without a creator is not. Let's look at the probability for design for a moment. One of the most amazing feats of engineering is the light of the firefly. When creating light, energy loss is science's greatest challenge. The heat created by a light bulb is lost energy. An incandescent light bulb ranges in efficiency from 1.9% for a 40 watt bulb to 2.2% for a 500 watt bulb. The energy efficiency is based on how much of the energy applied results in light and how much results in heat. A Florescent bulb ranges between 8 – 18%. The highest light efficiency achieved by human engineering is the low pressure sodium lamp which achieves between 15 – 29% light efficiency[91]. The other 70-85% of energy is lost as heat. The firefly holds the record with a 96.5% efficiency[92].

The greatest design by the most advanced technology and the most gifted minds on man still falls 70% short of what nature produces millions of times a year. The light bulb was first publicly displayed in 1879 and in 130 years science has not achieved a fraction of what was designed into nature. So the question is, if the greatest minds, the best designers, and the most advanced science cannot achieve the advanced technology of the firefly, how can anyone claim that there

is no designer who may be greater than man. Is it more probable to believe that nature happened upon such a perfect design even though man cannot even approach unto that great light built into such a tiny creature, or is it more probable that this technology was designed by our Creator? In Dawkins case, we have an atheist who created his own probability scale and then points to what came from his own imagination as evidence that supposedly 'safely proves' that a Creator is improbable. This statement is absurd at best. Perhaps this is why the Bible says that only a fool says in his heart that there is no God[93].

The question isn't one of probability, but reality. Ultimately, when the evolutionists rolls back the clock as far as possible, they are faced with the question, did the first known matter create itself, or was it created by something else. Why does the atheist find it easier to believe that matter created itself than believing that God created matter? Why is it considered absurd to believe in a Creator because you can't fathom His origin, but it is not considered absurd to believe matter always existed or it created itself? I have a more probable theory; perhaps the Bible holds more answers than the probability formulas of atheists. Look at **Hebrews 11:**

> 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

When we boil down the argument, the atheist is saying that because God cannot be seen and His eternal existence can't be understood by the human mind, He is excluded from the realm of possibility, yet they believe the universe's beginning had an eternal existence without beginning and this is acceptable. In either case, the beginning goes beyond man's understanding but God is not an acceptable option because God conflicts with the moral views of atheism. The bottom line of the argument is not a question of God's existence, but whether or not God will be allowed to rule over their lives. The concept of a God who governs mankind is abhorrent to the atheist mind. In the 'God Delusion', Richard Dawkins favorably quotes a speech by Nicholas Humphrey given before Amnesty International in 1997. He was asked by Amnesty International:

> [S]hould campaign against hurtful or damaging speeches or publications. His answer was a resounding no to such censorship in general: '**Freedom of speech is too precious** a freedom to be meddled with.' But he then went on to shock his liberal self by advocating **one important exception**: to argue in favour of censorship for the special case of children… …**moral**

> **and religious education**, and especially the education a child receives at home, where parents are allowed – even expected – to determine for their children what counts as truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Children, I'll argue, have a human right not to have their minds crippled by exposure to other people's bad ideas – no matter who these other people are. Parents, correspondingly, have no God-given licence to enculturate their children in whatever ways they personally choose: no right to limit the horizons of their children's knowledge, to bring them up in an atmosphere of dogma and superstition, or to insist they follow the straight and narrow paths of their own faith. In short, children have a right not to have their minds addled by nonsense, and we as a society have a duty to protect them from it. So we should no more allow parents to teach their children to believe, for example, in the literal truth of the Bible or that the planets rule their lives, than we should allow parents to knock their children's teeth out or lock them in a dungeon.

So you can see that the Bible is so abhorrent to the atheist that it is considered to be on par with physically and mentally abusing children. Throughout his books, Dawkins refers to belief in God as the virus of the mind that must be eradicated from society. As should be apparent, the battle lines are being drawn. While I do not believe all religion will be assaulted, I do very much believe that biblical Christianity will be tried as we approach the closing chapters of human history. The Bible warns that in the last days religion will abound, but the church will be tried through the fire of persecution. We as Christians should be prepared and stand firmly upon the faith found only in scripture. Even those who are not as radical as Dawkins are repeating his ideas. There are fewer things considered to be a greater threat to a man-centered global society than biblical Christianity. A leader in the 'spiritual but not religious' movement favorably quotes the 'God Delusion' as evidence against the Old Testament[94] and against biblical Christianity. They are for spirituality, but against the authority of the Bible. In her writings from 'The Book of Co-creation', Barbara Marx Hubbard writes the following:

> Out of the full spectrum of human personality, one-fourth is electing to transcend… One-fourth is destructive…they are defective seeds. In the past they were permitted to die a 'natural death'. …Now as we approach the quantum shift from the creature-human to the co-creative human – the human who is an inheritor of god-like powers – the destructive one-fourth must be eliminated from the social body. …Fortunately, you are not

> responsible for this act, we are. We are in charge of God's selection process for the planet Earth. He selects, we destroy. We are the riders of the pale horse, Death".
> …
> "This act is as horrible as killing a cancer cell. It must be done for the sake of the future of the whole. So be it; be prepared for the selection process which is now beginning. We, the elders, have been patiently waiting until the very last moment before the quantum transformation, to take action to cut out this corrupted and corrupting element in the body of humanity. It is like watching a cancer grow; something must be done before the whole body is destroyed.... The destructive one fourth must be eliminated from the social body."

Barbara Marx Hubbard is respected in many 'new thought' groups and has co-founded several globalist groups that are striving for a one world government. She is an adamant evolutionists and echoes many of the same ideas as Dawkins – especially the concept of raised consciousness. Hubbard and Dawkins both believe that anyone who does not buy into their ideology of evolution needs to either 'have their consciousness raised', or they are a threat to society. Barbara Marx Hubbard doesn't mind quoting the Bible when it is convenient, but she completely rejects the doctrines of scripture. One of her books teaches how to interpret the New Testament through evolution[95].

So we can see the problem is not a question about God's existence, but rather it is a desire to fit everything within a humanistic world view and reject anything that does not fit. Richard Dawkins and Barbra Marx Hubbard have different approaches, but they ultimately reach the same destination. Dawkins views all religion as a threat to the evolutionary world view while Hubbard attempts to customize religion to fit that same world view. Any who will not conform will be viewed as a threat.

We are going back to the pluralistic practices of Rome. In ancient Rome, all gods were accepted and all worshippers were free to exercise their religion but with one condition – they had to acknowledge Caesar as lord of all. Those who refused to bow to the Emperor were persecuted and often killed. Now we see the world mindset returning to that ideology. All religions are welcomed as long as evolution is acknowledged by all. Both Dawkins and Hubbard explain why evolution is so important. They believe that man is evolving to a higher state of

consciousness and humanity as a whole is one entity. In order to evolve, the entire meme (or common way of thinking) must be in agreement. They believe we must all evolve together. Those who hold to biblical traditions are believed to be stuck in the past and preventing the entire human race from taking that next evolutionary step.

The Bible and Christianity is only acceptable to the new thought as long as the Christian is willing to compromise their way of thinking to conform to that new thought. Of course we as Christians know that the compromises they are asking will indeed take us outside of true Christianity. So we are faced with a choice. We must stand by faith upon the word of God, or stand with the world to become one with the new order. We have not seen the real battle yet. In most wars propaganda precedes the invasion. If you can break the will of the enemy or even persuade them to defect, the battle is that much easier. Many, many churches and Christians have already begun to defect simply because they either do not know the truth of scripture or they love the praise of man more than the praise of God[96].

## Do sins in the name of God disprove God?

Several years back an atheist gave me a website with an article against Christianity. He said that if I read this article I would not be a Christian by the end. Of course I read the article and I am still a Christian. The article itemized a plethora of atrocities done in the name of God. It spoke of the crusades, inquisitions, murders of abortion doctors, sex scandals in the church and numerous other failings of men under the name of God. So does the sins of man disprove the truth of the Bible? This objection is answered in **Jeremiah 17:9-10**

> 9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
>
> 10 I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

Anyone who knows the scriptures also understands that many who act in the name of God are not acting according to the will or word of God. We as Christians are warned against wolves in sheep's clothing that will arise from among the church members to draw people away from God. Everyone who takes the name of Christ does not have the Spirit of Christ. Does a murderer of an abortion doctor disprove God or the Bible? Look at **1 John 4:7-8**

> 7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that

loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

**1 John 3:15b**

…you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Murder is not an act of love so regardless of what someone calls themselves, if they murder or show hatred, they are not of God. Jesus said that we are commanded to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us, so even if someone is the enemy of Christianity, we are still commanded to do good to them. It is indeed possible to confront error without hating those who live according to that error. God will raise up judgment if He desires to do so in this life.

The truth is that when the culture within the church accepts sin, the true men and women of God are made manifest because they refuse to turn from truth and conform to sin. Even today there are many practices within the church that contradict the Bible but are acceptable in the worldly culture around us. Many flaunt the name of Christ while openly doing the things that disgrace Him. Anyone can claim to be a Christian but the Bible states that if we claim to be of Christ and disobey the Bible, we are a liar. Look at **1 John 2:3-6**

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.
4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

This is very strong language and may sound harsh, but keep in mind that one of the Ten Commandments states, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain”. Most think this only means to use His name in profanity, but that is the least of our problems. The weight of this commandment is to take His name upon ourselves and then live in a way that contradicts His name. Anything done under the banner of His name that is contrary to His word is taking His name in vain. As Christians we should always be aware that every action is a reflection upon His name. The world stumbles over the hypocrisy of those who

claim to be living under the banner of Christianity. When this hypocrisy becomes part of the church culture, only those who stand upon the truth of the word will remain faithful. Unfortunately those who do not go along with unbiblical cultural shifts within the church are often labeled as legalists or considered to be ‘unspiritual’ and we will often be persecuted from within the church if we truly hold to the Bible. This will be especially true in the last times when the church departs from the faith[97].

Far from being exempt from failure, leaders have often been catalysts for the departure from the scriptures. The failure of ungodly leaders does not disqualify the scripture in any way. Look at how Jesus addressed this very thing in **Matthew 23:1-3**

> 1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
> 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.
> 3 "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.
> …
> 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
> …
> 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.
> 28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Many who hold positions in church leadership are far from God’s call to become shepherds who lead others into a deeper fellowship with God. A main point we should note is that Jesus identified the authority given by scripture and affirmed it in spite of the failure of the Pharisees. They read the Law of Moses to the people, but only kept the things that gave an appearance of righteousness to the public. Many falsely accuse those who hold to biblical Christianity as being ‘a Pharisee’; however, this is incorrect. A better comparison would be someone who is spiritual, but not obedient to the word of God. As Jesus stated, the word was affirmed in spite of their failures and they were condemned for not obeying the word. They said, but did not do. God’s people are instructed to observe the

word of God even if the Pharisees did not do so. They were also warned to not imitate the works of the religious leaders who departed from the truth. The Pharisees were full of hypocrisy and even though they appeared to some to be righteous outside, they were filled with iniquity and corruption in their hearts. Even so, this does not change the word of God or our responsibility to obey out of faith. The hypocrisy of others does not excuse us from our responsibility to walk in the truth. A Pharisee was not someone who kept the word of God, but they were those who had an air of spirituality but did not live by the commandments of God.

More times than I would like to admit, the church follows the culture rather than influencing the culture. One of the more striking examples was the Holocaust. During the height of Hitler's persecution against the Jews, Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave a speech at a church convention. He spoke against the atrocities against the Jews and was met by outrage. Before his speech ended, every pastor walked out of the auditorium in protest and he was left giving a speech to an empty room. Throughout history people who claim to know God act in opposition to His word. Our lives reflect His word or the absence of it.

It is interesting that in order to disprove the Bible, atheists present men and women who act contrary to the Bible. They are Christians in title only but are not truly disciples of Christ. In the book of Acts believers were first called Christians at the city of Antioch. The title 'Christian' was not a name that the church took upon themselves, it was a title that the world around them put upon them. The culture observed that they imitated Christ and since this was all their lives reflected, the world called them Christians which means 'follower of Christ'. Today people label themselves as Christians and the world around them questions the contradiction. Rather than reflecting Christ, the world questions why they do not follow Christ since they claim His name.

It would be an honor if critics pointed to our obedience to God and called us evil, but unfortunately they are usually pointing out the contradictions. Evil is evil even if someone is taking God's name in vain by claiming to be of Him. Atrocities and sins within the church do not contradict the Bible, but rather show that a person or group of people have abandoned true faith which produces works of obedience.

## *Conclusion*

Many questions presented by atheism are intended for nothing more than to antagonize the church. You should not think it necessary to answer every objection presented. The truth is that once we answer the challenges that are presented as the greatest difficulties, we should have no problem giving the scriptures the benefit of the doubt on the petty stuff. The atheist who has determined in his or her heart to find a reason not to believe will never cease looking for perceived faults in the scriptures and those claiming the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus made the comment that if someone will not believe the word already written in the scriptures through the prophets, neither will they believe even if someone were to rise from the dead[98].

Look at the miracles of Jesus and how few they persuaded to come to true faith. The enemies of Christ declared that His works were by the prince of the devils[99]. The very people who were fed by the miracle of feeding five thousand with a few loaves and two fish walked away from Him in disbelief when they were offended at the gospel [100]. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some who witnessed it ran to tell the leaders who opposed Jesus[101]. When the Pharisees saw this miracle, they were troubled and determined to put him to death[102]. The enemies of Christ also conspired to put Lazarus to death because many believed on Christ because of this amazing miracle[103]. When Jesus was in the tomb, the Jewish leaders requested and were granted a platoon of Roman soldiers to guard the tomb to make sure the disciples did not steal Jesus' body and claim a resurrection[104]. When Jesus arose, the soldiers witnessed it[105] and went to the Pharisees to tell them of these things. Even though the resurrection was not in dispute, they paid large sums of money to the soldiers to hide the resurrection and claim they failed in their duties and slept, which gave the disciples the opportunity to steal the body[106].

I mention all of this to bring out one important point; those who were determined not to believe refused to accept any evidence regardless of how infallible it may have been. The enemies of Christ did not dispute the miracle of Lazarus being

raised from the dead but instead chose to try to slay him to cover up that evidence. The platoon of soldiers were not disciples and their eyewitness account was not disputed; however, the enemies of Christ took counsel together to come up with a plan to hide the evidence and introduce what was known to be false in order to persuade others not to believe. If someone has determined to reject the Lord, all the evidence in the world will not change their heart. Even the resurrected Christ could not turn the hearts of those who hated Jesus, so it should not surprise us that atheism cannot accept any evidence that supports the gospel.

The Bible does indeed instruct us to be prepared with a well reasoned answer for the hope we have in the gospel[107]; however, the burden of converting the heart to the faith belongs to God alone. Do not get caught up in trying to persuade those who refuse to see with more evidence or answering the endless questions launched by critics. The fact is that most who are rejecting the gospel will not stop to consider any answer regardless of how well reasoned it is. While you are answering, they often are not listening but are preparing to launch the next objection. If the conversation can be flooded with more questions than can be reasonably answered, they do not have to face reality. When truly confronted, the atheist will mock or withdraw – unless God touches their heart with the gospel. In conclusion of this topic, I would like to present a few passages to consider. First look at **Titus 3:10-11**

> 10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;
> 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

This should be applied to any discussion about truth. If someone has reasonable questions and is willing to listen and consider the answers, it is good to continue a discussion. There will be times when someone is truly skeptical and will ask honest questions and raise sincere concerns that should be addressed. Keep in mind that our culture is desensitized to the gospel by misinformation from both atheism and false religions – some of which claim to be Christian. In these cases, answering questions can remove objections and open the door to the gospel. It is also important to realize that apologetics cannot save anyone. We cannot debate someone into the faith. Our goal is to present the gospel by which God has chosen to save those who believe. Our discussion should always remain within sight of the instruction of scripture found in **1 Corinthians 1:**

> 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but

unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

…

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Our modern era is no different than it was in the day of the apostles; some seek signs and some try to find truth in the wisdom of the world. What appears wise to the fleshly mind cannot save, for the wisdom of God is revealed through the cross of Jesus Christ and our redemption and reconciliation to God that is found through His sacrifice on our behalf. For the unredeemed, the evidence can remove the objections that stand as a barrier that deception has erected, but it cannot save. The gospel alone can change the heart. For the believer, the evidence can refresh us so that we are not burdened by the constant declarations against the scriptures. Doubts become burdens we carry and when we see the things that are given for our confidence, many will unload their burdens of doubt. Evidence does not build faith; it merely removes the barriers and burdens that draw our focus away from faith. It is one of the ways we cast off the weights and snares that entangle us so we can run with confidence and endurance[108].

You may recall the OJ Simpson trial and the fiasco that happened in that courtroom. This court case was the longest jury trial in California's history. The court case was 371 days long with a jury that was sequestered for 265 days. Many put a lot of the blame for the failed process on the judge who lost control of the courtroom. The strategy of the defense was to create confusion by bombarding the case with so many objections that the jury would be confused and opposition would become frustrated. At one time the judged stated from the bench, "This is the thirteenth time I have had to warn the defense…" In a normal courtroom a second or third warning would have been followed up by a contempt of court. There were 433 motions filed during the course of the trial and each motion took the focus away from the trial and had to be ruled on. From jury selection to deliberation, three hundred and seventy days had elapsed, yet when the jury received the case, it took merely four hours to deliberate a year's

worth of evidence.

Even with a strong case against OJ, the jury was so frustrated and taxed from the battle that they had no heart left to deliberate. After being separated from freedom for almost a year, who could rationally enter into a just debate over the evidence? With their wills broken, the jury chose the easiest verdict which would allow them to end the trial.

This serves as a proper example for the Christian to examine in light of the doctrines of atheism. The evidence is so overwhelmingly against the claims of atheism that they have no hope of winning an honest debate with an examination of the evidence. For this reason, they bombard the jury of popular opinion with so many objections that control is often lost and rational conversation is not possible. They know that if they can tax people to the point where there is no will to debate, most will side with the mountain of objections without taking time to see if it is truly based on evidence. Unfortunately, the most vocal group has become the accepted norm, regardless of the lack of evidence. If the Christian enters into the arena of answering every objection, it will become an endless attempt to answer every absurd motion.

In the ‘Christ Conspiracy’ by Dorothy Murdock, she presents a non-stop barrage against the Bible. When examining the claims, every so-called proof against the scriptures fell short. The evidence is either fabricated, paraphrased or is so vaguely referenced that the source cannot be located. Rarely does this book provide specific sources or direct quotes. Murdock provides only the first initial and the last name of those she supposedly quotes from, but does not provide any specific sources. It becomes very difficult and often impossible to verify her sources. Of the ones I researched, one hundred percent fell short and some were blatantly dishonest. At what point does the ranting become irrelevant? There must be a point when we cease arguing against such people. If she has proven to be unreliable by changing dates, giving false geographies, misquoting sources and presenting material that is shown to be a complete fabrication, is the Christian to be worried about the remaining mountain of objections? How many lies have to be exposed before we discredit the entire testimony?

If these books provided direct quotes and verifiable sources, it would be something to discuss, but there is a reason that these books fail to provide direct quotes or note their sources – they know that if an easy path is provided, it will be easy to invalidate their claims. Secrecy is the protection of their argument.

Like Darwin trying to persuade that his interpretation is right even though the evidence does not match his conclusion, these critics of the Bible expect the reader to accept their interpretation of the so-called evidence even though the truth compels us to the opposite conclusion.

As Christians we must realize that our goal is not to win every debate, but guide those who are willing to be rational into an honest view of the truth of the Bible. We should attempt to reveal the misconceptions, misinformation and assumptions that masquerade as evidence so that if someone is willing to hear, we can share the gospel. We should also explain that it is not reasonable to answer every objection as we explain that if the greatest arguments presented from the world's leading atheists fail, the truth of God is not what should be in question. If the truth of God has withstood the heaviest blows atheism has to offer, then we can have confidence in the message of the cross by which we stand and which also calls the atheist into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

## *The Gospel Message*

Perhaps you have never considered the message of God's love in the Bible. Everything in scripture is intended to reveal the love of God to you and call you into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Many think that Christianity is for those who are godly, but in truth the gospel calls those who are ungodly to come and find the love of God. The Bible tells us that the gospel is given to the ungodly. Look at these passages:

> **Romans 4:4-5** 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.
> 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,
> **Romans 5:6** 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Works cannot merit God's favor and the Lord states that our best righteous acts are unacceptable to God (Isaiah 64:6). The reason is that man cannot produce anything of God. He that works does not receive grace for he is too far in debt. Salvation is for the UNGODLY and Jesus justifies those who put their trust in His completed work. Jesus completed the requirements of the law and because He is God in the flesh, He was without sin and is able to redeem those who are under sin. He took upon Himself our sins and to those who receive the gift of salvation, they become the children of God and receive His righteousness. Look at **2 Corinthians 5:**

> 21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It is not your righteousness that makes you holy, it is the righteousness of Jesus credited to your life. He was credited with your sins and you are credited with His righteousness when you receive the gift of salvation by faith. Trust in Him and confess Him as Lord and you will be saved according to **Romans 10:9-10**

> 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
> 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Mere religion cannot save, but the one who believes and confesses Jesus Christ

will have salvation. If you believe and confess Him, you will be justified through Christ and find the salvation of God. It is God who calls you by His sovereign will and no one decides to become a Christian by their own will[1]. He will hear your prayer and Jesus has promised that all who are drawn and come to Him will be received[2]. If God is calling you, do not push aside His love but confess Jesus as Lord today.

# End Note References

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[1] John 1:12-13
[2] John 6:37

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[1] Proverbs 25:14
[2] 2 Kings 5
[3] John 12:43
[4] John 15:18-19
[5] Luke 6:26
[6] The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins
[7] Chapter 8: Hybridism
[8] 1 Timothy 6:5
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[14] Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
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[34] Matthew 5:17
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[40] 2 Timothy 2:15
[41] 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, Romans 1:18-19
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[44] Zechariah 9:9
[45] Luke 2:13-18
[46] Luke 2:25-32, and 2:37-38
[47] 1 Corinthians 5:20-21
[48] 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16
[49] Hebrews 7:17
[50] Hebrews 10:10-13
[51] John 16:4
[52] John chapters 14 and 15
[53] John 14:27

[54] Philippians 4:6-8
[55] Matthew 24:21
[56] Romans 5:2-5
[57] Hebrews 12:2-3
[58] Exodus 20:4-5
[59] Galatians 5:4
[60] Matthew 19
[61] 1 Corinthians 13:3
[62] John 14:21-24
[63] Psalm 50:16-17
[64] Luke 6:46-49
[65] Matthew 7:20-23
[66] Matthew 23:28
[67] 1 John 2:19
[68] Proverbs 28:5
[69] Hebrews 3:12
[70] Romans 12:12
[71] John 16:33
[72] 1 Peter 4:13
[73] Acts 14:22
[74] Psalm 11:7
[75] Philippians 4:13, Psalm 71:20
[76] Psalm 17:8
[77] 1 Peter 3:15
[78] 1 Corinthians 2:14
[79] 1 John 2:27
[80] Matthew 27:51
[81] 1 Timothy 2:5
[82] 1 John 2:1
[83] 1 John 1:6-9, 1 John 2:3-6

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