

*WitnessKit 1*  
*Faith and Reason*

Class 12  
Miracles and  
Understanding the Bible

# The Year 2000 Brought the Turn of the Millennium.

- The years following that event have brought the New Atheists into prominence. The New Atheists seek converts to atheism.
- Postmodernism sees all religions as equal in value, since it defines people by groups to which they belong, and believes all is opinion.
- Postmodernism's gains have led to all religions becoming equally suspect, based on the terrible actions of a few. This in turn has made the New Atheists more popular.

So we need answers to the

Counter the proselytizing efforts of the  
New Atheists.

# Example: Schaeffer's "Search Engine for Truth" can help.

- Scientist Richard Dawkins claimed a few years ago that God is too improbable to exist! However, he has recently called himself an agnostic rather than an atheist, claiming that he is **"6.9 out of seven' sure that God does not exist."**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9102164/Richard-Dawkins-6.9-out-of-seven-sure-that-God-does-not-exist.html>

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- The website reports, *“He is regarded as the most famous atheist in the world but last night (Feb 21, 2012) Professor Richard Dawkins admitted he could not be sure that God does not exist. “*
- So let’s examine his reasoning from his book *Climbing Mount Improbable*. (Book Review Reference: Logan Paul Gage, “Deconstructing Dawkins” CHRISTIANITY TODAY, November 16, 2007. A review of Alistair McGrath’s and Joanna Collicutt McGrath’s THE DAWKINS DELUSION)

# Dawkins' Statistical Approach:

- According to a review of Dawkins' book, **CLIMBING MOUNT IMPROBABLE**, Dawkins claims that humanity's existence is overwhelmingly improbable –
- AND that God must be at least as complicated as the world we live on, which means God must be as improbable as the world itself.

# Dawkins' Statistical Approach:

- He then takes a logical leap to say that God must not exist. He says it in a round-about way, by saying that if God is at least as improbable as the world, then His existence cannot explain the world.
- Since Dawkins believes science explains everything else, he uses this to imply that God is not there at all.

**We can use statistics, too!**

Let's see if ours agree with Dawkins.



# Let's use Schaeffer's Search Engine for Truth on Dawkins' claims.

- We want to look at all the possible ultimate beginnings, in light of the improbability of human existence and the world's existence, to see if God is a reasonable explanation.
- We will use a couple of bits of information to make the explanation more concrete.

Dawkins is right about one thing: The world's existence is **not** probable.

- If the expansion rate of the universe were changed by one part in 10 raised to the sixtieth power, the universe could **not support life**.
- One part in 10 to the 60th power is one part in a trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion. So the velocity of expansion in this real universe in motion is perfectly controlled.

# Getting a feel for the improbability

- Improbabilities multiply.
- Every other **rare event** necessary for life as we know it has a **small fractional probability** of happening by chance. If multiple rare events have to happen **together** for life to exist, the probability of life's existence **by chance** equals all those fractions multiplied together. Fractional probabilities multiply together to give an even smaller combined probability. A small fraction times another small fraction has an answer that is a much smaller fraction.  $1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10 = 1/1000$

$$P1 \times P2 \times P3 \times P4 \times \dots = P_{\text{combined}}$$

# Getting a feel for the improbability

- So we can see that the universe **with life** as we know it is at least as improbable as the exactness of its rate of expansion, or at least as improbable as one chance in a trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion.
- That is, **IF** it just happened by chance.

# Getting a feel for the improbability

- And we can assume that humanity's existence is at least that improbable as well,
- **IF** we came into existence by chance.

# Chance creates God???????

- Of course, IF God came into existence BY CHANCE, we could apply at least the same degree of improbability to His existence, by Dawkins' reasoning.
- But is that the **only** way for God to exist? To have come into existence BY CHANCE?
- No.

# 3 Options for the Ultimate Beginning

1. Absolute nothingness. 2. An impersonal beginning. 3. A Personal Beginning.

If we weighted these possibilities equally, God (with Mind) would have a **33% chance of existing prior to the universe.**

However, we can round off the probability of option 1 to zero, because that option defies all we know of natural law.

This leaves a raw probability of **50% for God's existence**—either an impersonal force or entity would be the beginning or a **Personal Being.**

# The act of **choosing** is different from chance.

- An impersonal beginning could **not** choose anything. An impersonal beginning predicts **chance alone** as a cause for events.
- A Personal beginning has the possibility of making choices.

*An impersonal beginning implies a chance origin for humans.*

A Personal beginning implies a choice origin for humans.



1. Absolute nothingness. 2. An impersonal beginning. 3. A Personal Beginning.

- If we humans came into being by chance— Option 2--we would be at least as improbable as one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion.
- **Option 3 has a different probability for our existence.** We know that Persons **like** to create beings in their own image. It's called **parenting**. About 80% of us choose to become parents.

# Option 2 impersonal beginning vs Option 3 Personal Beginning

- So if we take a 50% probability for option 3 as a raw possibility, and an 80% probability, if option 3 is correct, for that Personal Beginning to create beings in His image, and multiply  $50\% \times 80\%$ , that gives us a 40% chance of coming into existence.

Thus option 2 predicts less than one chance in a trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion for human existence,

Whereas option 3 predicts a 40% chance.

# Coming to grips with the answer

- So which option is more likely to match reality, given that human beings actually exist?

*Option 2, an impersonal beginning, which gives us less than one chance in a trillion trillion trillion trillion,*

Or Option 3, a Personal Beginning, which gives us a 40% chance of existing?

# God actually answered Dawkins

- A very long time ago. See Isaiah 43:10 and 13. “You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me... Even from eternity, I am He.”
- No god ever had a beginning... God has always been, **from eternity**. He is the ultimate Reality through Whom everything else began to exist.

# Dawkins and Other Scientists

- Are trained to *automatically* rule out miracle as a possibility in their work. That is a reasonable approach for laboratory science. That is why they do not even ***think of*** option 3 as a possibility when they do their statistics. That is a poor approach for studying origins, because God is so likely to exist.

Because God is SO LIKELY to exist, ruling out miracle is also *unreasonable* when reading a book that claims to be *communication from God*.

- But even in that instance, it is right to test the document for reasonableness regarding miracle. We will suggest an approach for testing.

# If you are trying to encourage someone to read the Bible

Who does not believe in miracles, this is a helpful approach to share with them.

If you believe in the Bible as God's message, but are not sure about the inerrancy issue, this approach may also be helpful for you—to organize your questions as you ask God for answers.

# Review of the Previous Lesson: Assumptions about miracles

- We have seen in previous sessions that strong reasons indicate that the Bible is **historically credible**.
- We must decide how to read it regarding miracles.
- Is there a way to view miracle stories reasonably as opposed to gullibly or skeptically?

# You may already be at a point

- Of being perfectly certain that miracle stories in the Bible are true, based upon the goodness of God and the evidence that the Bible is communication from Him.
- Or you may be at a point where the miracle reports are bothersome when you read.
- We are told, in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to ***“test all things. Hold fast to what is good.”***



# How can we test the miracle accounts

And hold fast to what is good?

Here are some tests to apply.

1. If the miracles are a validation of God's communication through the book, we would expect them to be **consistent with His character**, not merely capricious.
2. We would also expect them to present an **eternal perspective**.
3. We would also expect the **reports to be internally consistent**.
4. We would expect them to have an eternal perspective **when applied to painful circumstances**.

# We have God's best wishes for our study.

- This approach allows us to read prayerfully, asking God's help while we read –

*“Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.” (Psalm 119:18)*

*“When He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:13)*

# Test 1: Are the miracles consistent with God's character?

- The miracles that skeptics use to attack the credibility of the Bible often attack **at the point of God's character.**
- The Virgin Birth is a miracle that comes under attack in that manner, because some skeptics take this miracle as something other than a pure act of creation from nothing. Just as God created the universe by His spoken word from nothing that was material, God created the physical, earthly body of Jesus in the Virgin Birth.

# The First and Second Adams

- This point is clarified several places in the Bible. In **John chapter 1**, the Bible declares that Jesus has always been alive. **The Virgin Birth did NOT create Jesus.**
- **Psalm 2** declares Messiah to be God's Son *hundreds of years before* the Virgin Birth.
- **Romans chapter 5** calls Jesus “**the Second Adam.**” Jesus was like Adam in having no earthly father. Adam was a direct creation of God. Jesus' earthly body likewise was a direct creation of God.

# The First and Second Adams

- Just as Adam's decision to sin had profound results for all humans, allowing evil into the world, Jesus' perfect absence of sin had profound results for all humans, *delivering humans from evil*. Read Romans chapter 5 to see what the Bible says about that.

Read John 8:39-59 Sometimes people choose wrong explanations for miracles.

- This passage shows that skeptics of the Virgin Birth gave Jesus a difficult time during His ministry on earth. The miracle reports of the Virgin Birth cannot be attributed to ignorance of reproduction during that timeframe. This was not a mistake due to misunderstanding the issues.
- **Genesis 3** shows that God planned the Virgin Birth from the beginning of time—that Jesus was ***Seed of the Woman*** who took the bruise in His heel and crushed the Serpent's head.

# Read **Luke chapter 1**

- God took great care to make the Virgin Birth believable during that timeframe, by giving Mary's cousin Elizabeth an **obvious** miracle-baby due to Elizabeth's old age. Then God gave Elizabeth the information about the Virgin Birth of Jesus, so that Elizabeth was the messenger of this truth to the community.
- God wants us to believe truth, and He makes possible a search for truth—in His great fairness—*even when miracles are the issue.*



# The Virgin Birth

- The Bible scatters the answers about the Virgin Birth through many different passages of Scripture. *God anticipated the questions.* You have to seek to find His answers.
- So one important point about miracles in the Bible—they are intertwined with the text all over the book, even though it was written over the course of 1500 years.
- Read the entire book!

# Test Number 2

- Does the miracle reveal an eternal perspective?
- The miracle of the Virgin Birth meets this test. **Genesis 3** reveals that the purpose of the ***Seed of the Woman*** is to defeat all evil. That defeat of all evil opened the way to eternal life for all who will receive that truth. God's plan to defeat death itself is implied in Genesis 3, where death came into the world because of human sin.

# Test Number Three: Are the reports internally consistent?

- The Virgin Birth meets this test. The text of the Bible is consistent about it throughout all 1500 years of its writing. The Genesis text is in the earliest part of Biblical history. The Romans text is among the latest portions. The passage in the Gospel according to John is in the latest portion—with only the book of Revelation written later, and possibly John's 3 letters.

## Test # 4: Do the miracles show an eternal perspective when dealing with painful circumstances?

- The Virgin Birth meets this test. The miracle itself **produced** difficult circumstances, allowing skeptics to insult Jesus in the **John chapter 8** passage.
- God clearly believed the eternal value of the Virgin Birth outweighed the temporary difficulty of insult. The Virgin Birth of Jesus allowed the human race to “start over” spiritually and gain freedom from sin, since the Second Adam had no sin, and had no inherited sin nature from a human father. **If He adopts us into His family, He gives us His righteousness.**

# This matches one of the Titles of Messiah found in **Jeremiah 23:5-6**.

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. <sup>6</sup> In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Jeremiah 23:5-6 (NKJV)

# John 1:12

- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”
- Jeremiah 23:5-6 tells us that one name for Messiah is “the LORD our righteousness.”
- **If Jesus adopts us into God’s family, He gives us His righteousness.**

# These four tests

- Can be applied to any miracle in the Bible. It is a good idea to pray for help when you are pursuing these questions. It also is a good idea to build up **a database of Bible in your memory**, so that the Holy Spirit can remind you of various passages when you seek answers.
- Read at least one chapter of Bible every day. Three chapters will give you the entire Bible in a year. Reading it through every year will help build that database for new questions that you may not have thought about yet.

We can HOLD FAST TO WHAT IS GOOD by believing miracles that meet these tests.

4 tests  
to  
apply

1. True miracles validate God's communication in His book, and are **consistent with His character**, not merely capricious.
2. True miracles present **an eternal perspective.**
3. True miracle **reports are internally consistent.**
4. True miracles have an eternal perspective **when applied to painful circumstances.**



# One question for yourself at this point:

- Have you received the Holy Spirit into your own life yet? He stands ready to help you in the pursuit of truth, yet you must meet God's terms to have His Holy Spirit in your life. To understand His terms, look back over "The Four Spiritual Laws" in Class 10, starting at slide 91.

# God wants us to have faith.

- Hebrews chapter three and chapter eleven reveal the tremendous value God places upon trust in Him,
- AND how seriously sinful He sees the act of failing to trust Him.
- The kind of faith He wants us to have is REASONABLE faith that LOVES TRUTH.
- Belief in miracles that meet the tests we have mentioned is reasonable faith that loves truth.
- *“Hold fast to what is good!”*

# The most difficult category of miracle

- Often skeptics will choose a category of miracle that appears to fail test number one, **BECAUSE** it meets test number 2.
- Examples include things like the plagues in Moses' time that were painful to the Egyptians, while resulting in rescue of the Israelites. Those painful miracles appear, at first glance, to demonstrate *partiality* on God's part, which the Bible says He does NOT show.
- So let's test the plagues of Egypt.

We can **HOLD FAST TO WHAT IS GOOD** by believing miracles that meet these tests.

Test 1

Test 2

1. True miracles validate God's communication in the book, and are **consistent with His character**, not merely capricious.
2. True miracles present an **eternal perspective**.
3. True miracle reports are **internally consistent**.
4. True miracles have an eternal perspective when applied to **painful circumstances**.

# We address the issue of **partiality** and the **plagues** on Egypt.

To start,

- The issue is FAR more complicated than the simple Bible story you remember from childhood. The Bible addresses underlying issues in various places, and the principles all are consistent.
- In this matter, an adult must seek for truth all over the Bible to find the answers.

# Here are some categories

To research in the Bible in the search for answers.

1. What are the requirements individuals must meet to have eternal life during Old Testament times? How is eternity involved in the plagues?
2. What did God say directly about the plagues and that issue?
3. What are the limits-of-what-God-could-stand regarding evil as shown by the plagues?

# Categories to consider:

- Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Did Pharaoh harden his own heart? Was God being capricious when He hardened Pharaoh's heart? How was eternity involved in God's decision?
- What about slavery? What is God's opinion about that, given that He used the plagues to accomplish rescue from slavery?
- What about determinism? Couldn't God have simply switched Pharaoh's opinion to "let the people go" mode without the plagues?

# Categories to consider:

- What about the timing of the rescue? Why did God wait so long to do the miracles to accomplish rescue? Does timing have anything to do with eternity?
- Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously? Does He have purpose in the timing of life and death events?



# The Bible has definite answers to all these questions.

- But you have to seek to find. If you are content to stop with elementary age-group insights on the Bible story, you won't find the answers and you won't be able to answer the skeptics.
- And you will have a weakness in your faith when you look at the miracles as an adult.
- Sometimes you hear, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." That is a good starting point for "holding fast to what is good," but it is **ONLY** a starting point.

# A Suggestion

- We need to bravely and prayerfully and carefully seek answers to hard questions as well as clinging to the truth of God's word.
- The WitnessKit Bible Study is a framework study. It helps us read the Bible for its system of thought. It will help us develop our own understanding of the Bible's frame of reference. A proper frame of reference will help us know the Bible's boundaries around the answers to hard questions.

“God said it, I believe it, that settles it.”



The reason that is a good starting point for holding fast to what is good: the Bible is the **RIGHT** book! It really is God's word. But it is no help to someone who has chosen or been brought up with the **WRONG** book.

If we obey God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves, we will want to help them find the right Book.

So let us proceed category by category to address the issues

About the plagues on Egypt.

# Test Category One

1. What are the requirements individuals must meet to have eternal life during Old Testament times? How is eternity involved in the plagues?

# Category One

- The short answer is found in **Hebrews chapter eleven**, although the answer also appears in the entire book of **Jonah** as well, in **Psalm 21**, and many other places.
- For eternal life to be possible, a person needs to believe in the true and living God, to repent of sins, and to understand the need for a payment for sins to satisfy God's justice. The person must respond in faith to God's interaction in his life. Psalm 21 mentions ASKING GOD for life.
- Many places in the Old Testament, people made a covenant commitment to be God's people.

# Category One

- For the plagues in Egypt to meet the eternal purpose test, they should address some of these eternal issues, both for the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Israelite perspective on these issues is obvious, the Egyptians' perspective less so. Do the plagues motivate the Egyptians to believe in the true and living God, as opposed to the sun-god or other idols?

# Category One

- The answer is Yes! Each plague revealed that the God of the Israelites was the powerful, alive God, whereas their idols did not help.
- God decided when to lift the darkness, not Ra, the supposed Sun-god. God decided the firstborn of Pharaoh, who was worshipped as an idol, would die as a human. The human son of Pharaoh was not a god.



# Category One

- Do the plagues motivate the Egyptian people toward repentance? Do the plagues allow the Egyptians to respond in faith to God's interaction in their lives?
- The answer again is yes. The Egyptians needed to repent of holding slaves, and their response was evidenced by payment of wages as the Israelites left.
- There was a sense of justice involved in those payments.

# Category One

- The Egyptians also needed to repent of the murder of the sons of slaves to prevent uprisings. The plague called “the death of the firstborn” was a severely strong motivator for such repentance. Here again, they could respond in faith (and avoid the loss of life) by following the directions Moses gave about the doorposts and lintels. The “mixed multitude” that left Egypt with the Israelites shows that some did respond in faith.

# Category One

- Over and over in the Bible, God reveals severe judgment on societies that adopt murder of innocents into their legal systems. Egypt, during the time of Moses, was an example of this principle. Moses' own life was endangered during his infancy because of the Egyptian legal system.
- **Partiality** on God's part was not the problem. The problem was the evil that had overtaken that ancient society, which God judged and then delivered His followers. The plagues were severe because the evil was severe.

# Test Category Two

1. What did God say directly about the plagues and eternal issues?

# Category Two

- What did God say directly about the plagues and eternal issues?
- The first mention is **Genesis 15:13-16**.
- <sup>13</sup> Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> But in the fourth generation they shall return here, **for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.**" (NKJV)

# Category Two

- Here we see the eternal issues involved people back in Canaan rather than either Israelites or Egyptians. The Amorites of Canaan, during Abraham's time, worshiped the true and living God. 400 years later, they had adopted the violently evil idolatry of their neighbors in Canaan, and God delayed their judgment until that time. His delay in rescue of Israel from Egypt accomplished eternal life for some in the Amorite tribe.
- So God is concerned about the eternal destiny of EVERYONE. **He is not partial about people groups regarding eternity.**

# Visible Miracles of the Bible

Such as the rescue from Egyptian slavery, often deal with people groups, whereas the Holy Spirit deals with each individual heart.

- When God intervenes in human history, often it is on a sweeping basis.
- Eternal judgment will be on an individual basis.

Therefore, each of us individually has a responsibility to seek God, and not to depend upon belonging to a group.

# Category Two

- One conclusion we can draw about the Bible: When the Bible focuses on one nation, God is still concerned about other nations.
- The book of **Jonah** bears that out. God sent Jonah to the enemies of Israel—the then-violently-evil Assyrians. God demanded their repentance. Jonah did not want to go because he was afraid they **WOULD** repent. He knew God would forgive them if they repented and they would live to fight another era. That's what happened.



# Category Two

- What did God say directly about the plagues and eternal issues?
- Exodus 7:3-5 <sup>3</sup> And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. <sup>5</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them." (NKJV)

# Category Two

- What did God say directly about the plagues and eternal issues?
- Exodus 12:12<sup>12</sup> For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD.** (NKJV)
- The ideas believed about the gods of Egypt did not provide the moral strength to prevent the murder of innocents—the judgment against their gods was appropriate for helping them change course on a temporal level. Note that the firstborn of Pharaoh was considered a god.

# Category Two

- For their moral well-being as a nation, they needed God's principles in their national law.
- For their eternal well-being, the Egyptians needed to know who is the True and Living God. Faith in Him was and still is the way to find eternal life.

# Category Three

1. What are the limits-of-what-God-could-stand regarding evil as shown by the plagues?

# Category Three

1. What are the limits-of-what-God-could-stand regarding evil as shown by the plagues?

We have mentioned this already—that when evil reaches the level of murder of innocents condoned by society, God intervenes with severe judgments. The principle is mentioned many times in the Bible. Here is just one example.

# Category Three

1. What are the limits-of-what-God-could-stand regarding evil as shown by the plagues?

Jeremiah 32:35-36 <sup>35</sup> And they built the high places of Baal which *are* in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.' <sup>36</sup> "Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: (NKJV)

# Category Three

Here we see God does not show partiality. If ANY nation condones the murder of innocents, that nation is in severe danger of God's judgment.

We face life issues in today's politics that are placing our own nation and world in danger of God's judgment.

God is not partial, but is a righteous judge.

## Category 4

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?  
Did Pharaoh harden his own heart?  
Was God being capricious when He  
hardened Pharaoh's heart? How was  
eternity involved in God's decision?



# If Pharaoh had never hardened

His own heart, God would have been capricious when God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

However, if you read carefully, you will note that Pharaoh hardened his own heart many times before God did.

His dynasty caused the death of the firstborn sons of slaves. That is strong evidence of a hardened heart.

# God's purpose in hardening Pharaoh's heart:

- Exodus 7:3-5 <sup>3</sup> And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. <sup>5</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them." (NKJV)

# God's purpose in hardening Pharaoh's heart:

- Exodus 9:16 <sup>16</sup> But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you (Pharaoh) up, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. (NKJV)
- Here we see that God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that people in Egypt AND in the WHOLE WORLD would be able to know the real God and find eternal life.

# Category Five

What about slavery? What is God's opinion about that, given that He used the plagues to accomplish rescue from slavery?

# What about slavery?

- This is an important concept to consider. A modern book describing the ancient world states that in many parts of that world, everyone except the emperor was a slave to someone. The society was so hierarchical that nobody was free, and some ancient languages did not even have a word to represent freedmen.
- Even though slavery is part of the fallen nature of this world, **GOD HATES SLAVERY**. The principle in the Bible is that God **WANTS** to **RESCUE** people from slavery.

# What about slavery?

- Exodus 3:7-8 <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, ...NKJV

# What about slavery?

- The thing that makes this issue complicated is this. God allowed for, and set limits on slavery in the society of ancient Israel.
- In the Law, Israelites themselves were not allowed to be slaves, but only to contract their labor for a period of less than seven years for the payment of debts. If an Israelite was captured or bought as a slave by an outsider, his next of kin was required to buy him back.
- Serfdom, or share-cropping as bound to the land, was also prohibited by God's law—the form of slavery that took over Europe later and was informally practiced during the Jim Crow era in the US through improper use of debt.

# What about slavery?

- God took this issue so seriously, that He judged the nation when they failed to keep His rules. One of the causes of the **Babylonian captivity** was failure to abide by these limits. They failed to free their indentured servants at the appropriate time, and they took back some who had been freed. See Jeremiah 22:13-17, and Jeremiah 34:8-21, and Isaiah 5:8-12.
- (Remember that justice is ALWAYS a matter that eternity will settle, too.)



# What about slavery?

- The Isaiah passage needs a little explanation. In ancient Israel, inherited land was not to be sold, but remained in the family perpetually. It could only be leased for a period of less than 7 years to repay debts. This system prevented serfdom. In Isaiah's time that rule was disregarded.
- So, not only was God against slavery, He established rules to prevent several varieties of slavery.

# What about slavery?

- The problematic verses involve detailed rules that were established in the books of Moses regarding slaves from other nations. The rules are designed to limit the harshness of the existence of the evil of slavery.
- The KEY rule in that entire system is found in **Deuteronomy 23:15.**

# What about slavery?

- Deuteronomy 23:15. <sup>15</sup> "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. <sup>16</sup> He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him. (NKJV)

# What about slavery?

- This rule established that slavery in ancient Israel could ONLY be a VOLUNTARY decision to trade one's labor for room and board. Any slave was free to leave at any time if conditions were harsh. Other citizens were required to help him and not to oppress. So God's rules about ancient slavery were based on FREEDOM.

# What about slavery?

- Even with rules in the Torah regarding slavery, the people had an escape hatch. The rules did not override the will of the individual if he chose to leave. Freedom to leave meant the owner or employer had to make conditions bearable for those who worked for him, or they would leave.
- God hates involuntary servitude. Slavery is NEVER His good and perfect will. Heaven will be totally free of slavery.
- He does not like any kind of slavery. He sees it as an injustice and a form of oppression.

# Category Six

What about determinism? Couldn't God have simply switched Pharaoh's opinion to "let the people go" mode without the plagues?

# What about determinism?

- Here we see God allowing something He hates—slavery in Egypt—in order to provide eternal life for the Amorites back in Canaan, even knowing that they will take a path toward terrible evil and will require judgment later. Then we see God rescuing His people, and all who will respond in faith, based on the evidence of the plagues.
- Clearly, God is interested in winning human hearts to Him, not in controlling people like a puppet-master.

# What about determinism?

- The Bible clearly states that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”—1 John 1:5.
- “The LORD is righteous. He loves righteousness. The upright will behold His face.”—Psalm 5:4.
- “No evil dwells with God.”—Psalm 11:7.
- For these things to be true of God, He cannot be the source of evil.



# What about determinism?

- God cannot be the source of evil. He cannot be a puppet-master who causes people to sin. He can allow sin without being its source. He can set limits on sin. People's choices have to be real. Even when God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh's choices were real.
- God did not choose for Pharaoh or in Pharaoh's place. He simply allowed Pharaoh to get trapped in his own choice.
- God judges for all eternity. Earthly judgments are preliminary. People have motivation to make right choices by understanding that.

# Category Seven

What about the timing of the rescue? Why did God wait so long to do the miracles to accomplish rescue? Does timing have anything to do with eternity?

# What about the timing of the rescue?

- We actually already answered this question in [Genesis 15:16](#). God waited to rescue so that some of the Amorites could find Him and His eternal life. Their eternal good was of high value to Him.
- This is a general principle regarding the suffering God allows His people to endure. That suffering is a privilege for the purpose of accomplishing salvation for others. See Philippians 1:12-14, & 29, 1 Peter 4:13, and 2 Peter 3:8.

# What about the timing of the rescue?

- The suffering God allows His people to endure is a privilege for the purpose of accomplishing salvation for others.
- 2 Peter 3:8-9<sup>8</sup> But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (NKJV)

# What about the timing of the rescue?

- Such suffering is a completion of the suffering of Christ, who suffered for all—so that those who will receive His salvation can have eternal life.
- 1 Peter 4:12-14 <sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you . (NKJV)

# What about the timing of the rescue?

- The suffering God allows His people to endure is a privilege for the purpose of accomplishing salvation for others.
- Philippians 1:12-14, 29, <sup>12</sup> But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; <sup>14</sup> and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (NKJV)
- For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.  
Philippians 1:29 (NKJV)

# Category Eight

Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously? Does He have purpose in the timing of life and death events?

# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- Human beings have no right to murder others because the timing of people's death belongs to God's goodness. Only God has the wisdom and righteousness to know the right time for such an event. He chooses with eternity in mind—not just for that individual, but for others in his sphere of influence. God is NOT capricious.
- We can see that principle in the description of God's reasons for Noah's flood—Genesis 5-9.



# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- The world had become a violent place. It was so violent that only one righteous family was left. Methuselah had named his son Lamech after a murderer and polygamist. Methuselah died in the year of the flood. Methuselah was Noah's grandfather, and Noah was a preacher of righteousness who was never able to even reach his own grandfather. If you read the genealogy of Noah, and do the math, and read the previous chapters of Genesis, these facts become evident.

# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- **Genesis 6** declares that God used the flood in some way to reduce human life-spans and also (2 chapters later) He established capital punishment for murder in the aftermath of the flood. The implication: so that humans would have to think about their own mortality and the value of human life. People can't find eternal life if they don't face the facts about their own human condition.
- Yet in **Ezekiel 33**, God describes his displeasure with the death even of the wicked. He clearly prefers repentance even then.

# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- God wants everyone to have eternal life. God is on the side of life. God loves life. God wants us to love life.
- In these matters, God cares about the eternal life of each individual. Only He has the wisdom to optimize the life-span of each individual so that others, as well as that person, find eternal life.
- People make real choices. Death is not God's perfect desire, but is an allowed evil for the possibility of people's choosing eternal life.

# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- Deuteronomy 30:15-18 <sup>15</sup> "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, <sup>16</sup> in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. (NKJV)

# Does God use His authority over life and death capriciously?

- Deuteronomy 30:19-20 ... Therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; <sup>20</sup> that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; (NKJV)

# Our Response to Miracles

- Jeremiah 13<sup>1</sup> Thus the LORD said to me: "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water."<sup>2</sup> So I got a sash according to the word of the LORD, and put *it* around my waist.<sup>3</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying,<sup>4</sup> "Take the sash that you acquired, which *is* around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock."

# Our Response to Miracles

- <sup>5</sup> So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. <sup>6</sup> Now it came to pass after many days that the LORD said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there."  
<sup>7</sup> Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.....

# Our Response to Miracles

- Jeremiah 13. <sup>11</sup> For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me, says the LORD, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear...
- <sup>16</sup> Give glory to the LORD your God Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death *And makes it dense darkness.*



# Our Response to Miracles

- <sup>17</sup> But if you will not hear it, My soul will weep in secret for *your* pride; My eyes will weep bitterly And run down with tears, Because the LORD'S flock has been taken captive. ...
- <sup>23</sup> Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil. Jeremiah 13:1-23 (NKJV)
- Our responses to miracles should be to CLING TO GOD tenaciously, to hear and obey His precepts and be in the habit of doing good, so that we avoid being taken captive by any evil.

# Our Response to Miracles

- These things are written for our examples. We are to pay attention to the principles as we read.
- We must NOT Allow the new atheists to win hearts and minds. We must cling to God and search for ways to influence others toward God.

# JOHN 6:67-68

Jesus said therefore to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?”

Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

# Homework Class 12 Set 1

Reading Revelation 21:8 told us something about God's criteria for judgment. Read Revelation 20:11-15. What do these verses add to that knowledge?

Did the verse in Revelation 21 or the verses in chapter 20 give us complete knowledge about the judgment?

Read Chapter 35 in **THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT.**

- How does modern technology prove the existence of cause and effect?

# Homework Class 12 Set 1

- Give an example of a consumer product that demonstrates cause and effect.
- Give an example of a consumer product available in David Hume's lifetime that he probably used, and which demonstrated cause and effect. Is Hume's form of skepticism, having as its foundation a denial of the ability to know cause and effect, a good reason to reject the idea of a First Cause?

# Homework Class 12 Set 2

Read Exodus 20:1-20. The first four commandments of the Ten Commandments require respect for God and regular time set aside to learn about Him.

- The next five relate to actions among humans.
- The last relates to motivations.

Given that God promises to judge us by our deeds, how can these commandments be viewed as implying both God's moral absolutes and God's mercy?

# Homework Class 12 Set 2

- Read Chapter 36 in THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT.
- Kant's agnosticism is based on the idea that people cannot know reality – that their own mind renders their view of reality subjective by categorizing reality based on the structure of the mind. So, if it were impossible to know objective reality, it would follow that it would be impossible to know anything beyond sensory experience.

# Homework Class 12 Set 2

- But of course, we do know reality. Our ability to modify our environment by conscious effort demonstrates that we DO perceive reality.
- We also can recognize a person whose mental structure no longer works well enough to perceive reality, and multiple observers can concur in that observation. So this foundation for agnosticism is VERY THIN.



# Homework Class 12 Set 2

- **We perceive light**, and our eyes perceive objects by reflected light. In a totally dark cave, we cannot use our eyes to perceive objects, but we can still perceive them through other means. We can bark our shins on them. We can taste them. We can hear them hit the floor of the cave. The limitations on sight do not render reality unknowable.
- Helen Keller, whose sight and hearing were lost, understood reality enough to write books.

# Homework Class 12 Set 2

- For some reason, God has chosen to hide His presence from our eyes, but that does not mean we cannot know His existence. We must search for Him in other ways just as a person in a dark cave must search to understand his surroundings. If the Ten Commandments are an accurate representation of His moral law, He wants us to spend one day per week at that task. It matters to Him that we should seek and find Him, and rewards go with that search.

# Homework Class 12 Set 2

- These facts – that our minds exist, that they are able to assimilate knowledge of reality – indicate that a Source exists for that correspondence between reality and our minds.
- How did Geisler refute Kant's agnosticism on pages 637 and 638?
- What criteria can you suggest as ways to know about God?

# Homework Class 12 Set 3

- Read I Corinthians 13:1-13.
- Presumably, “knowing all mysteries” would encompass any mysteries philosophical mysticism might understand. What did the Apostle Paul rate more highly than “knowing all mysteries” in spiritual value?

# Homework Class 12 Set 3

- Read Chapter 37 in THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT. This chapter needs a note of clarification. Some of the quotations use the word “sensuous” where modern usage would choose the word “sensory,” and in the past both words carried similar meanings and connotations. At present, the word sensuous has drifted to become synonymous with “sensual.” That is not the meaning in this chapter. If the chapter seems confusing at those points, substitute the word sensory for sensuous, and it will make perfect sense.

# Homework Class 12 Set 3

- An example of mysticism is found in Zen Buddhism. What are some essentials of mystical belief systems?
- What method is used in Zen Buddhism to reach a state of mystical experience?
- Why should mystical subjective experience without logic be considered on a higher plane than logical use of the mind?

# Homework Class 12 Set 3

- How is the Judeo-Christian belief in the human being as created in the image of God an affirmation of the value of human logic and an affirmation of the value of human beings?
- What did Robert Ellwood warn about as “the dark side of mysticism?”

# Homework Class 12 Set 3

- At what level did William Lane Craig say that mystics deny the logical law of non-contradiction? Why did he say that?
- What is wrong the mystical claim that ordinary reality is illusion?
- If God exists and will judge our lives, do you think a philosophy that denies the existence of evil is helpful? Is God fair when He promises that His Holy Spirit will witness to our spirits about the truth of His existence and His judgment of us?