

Where Was God?

Recently Blow the Trumpet received a letter from someone who questioned why anyone could believe in God when all the tragedy in the world proved that He couldn't possibly exist. Perhaps you have pondered the same questions this man posed to us. And although what he has written reflects great anger, we believe it deserves an answer. Below is his letter and our response.

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To Whom It May Concern:

So now that Indonesia has suffered the worst natural disaster in decades, all the mindless double talk begins. I just love listening to people like you try to defend god at times like this. You have more nerve than a wizard in the dark ages. At least the wizard was conjuring up something you can see. You and other christians of your ilk create your "potion of lies" out of nothing. I'm just amazed that anyone with an ounce of gray matter would fall for anything you "men of the cloth" would say. I'm sure you think you have an "answer" for everything in life, but I would like to see you try your hand at some questions that have been bothering me lately.

- Why does a loving god allow children to get cancer? Go visit St. Jude's Hospital if you want to see all the suffering they go through
- Why does the "almighty" permit AIDS to consume its victims? Oh yea I forgot. He is sending it to rid the world of faggots.
- Why does your loving god allow people to starve to death in under-developed nations?
- Why does He permit war?
- Why does this "just" god of yours allow racism and bigotry? How do those thing fit into his divine plan?
- Why does god allow children to be molested? Where was he when catholic priests were raping (that's right, raping) choirboys in their parishes?
- Why does god allow all the filth and squalor in the world?
- Why all the murder? Why all the death? What is his thing with death anyway?
- Why does your god allow people to be destroyed by earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tidal waves, and tsunamis? Why doesn't he just rain down fire and finish the job, whatever that job is?
- Finally, if god is so loving and so powerful why doesn't he do something to prevent all the suffering, or is it he just doesn't care?

Name withheld

The Response:

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your recent letter. We believe it poses some very interesting questions and despite the fact that many people, including professing Christians, struggle with making sense out of tragedy, there is an answer. Furthermore, that answer is clear and direct. It is not some theological mumbo jumbo. And it is definitely not some “mindless double talk.”

This might come as a surprise to many, but the God of the Bible actually hates human suffering. That’s right! God hates suffering! Furthermore, the scriptures make it absolutely clear that a time is coming when all suffering will end.

The Bible reveals that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will establish a Kingdom whose laws will be so perfect they will fill the entire planet with great peace (Isa. 2:4, 32:18, Micah 5:1-3), great prosperity (Isa. 27:6, 30:23; 33:15), great health, and great hope. It will be a Kingdom in which sight will be restored to the blind and strength will be restored to the lame (Isa. 35:5-7). Furthermore, the entire earth will be like a garden paradise (Isa. 35:1; 41:17-20). When describing this Kingdom, the great prophet Isaiah proclaimed that when it comes, God Himself shall “wipe away all tears” (Isa. 25:8). He went on to say that at this time, sorrow and sighing would actually take flight never to return again (Isa. 35:10).

Imagine what a wonderful place this will be. Imagine a world where you will never hear the sounds of grief and anguish. Imagine never having to witness the torment of fathers and mothers searching for children that were ripped from their arms and whisked to a torturous death? Imagine a place where hospitals are unnecessary and food banks irrelevant. Imagine a place where hope is everywhere and despair is a distant memory. That place is real and the Great God of hope has given His immutable promise that it is going to come. Furthermore, it will be presided over by a Great Deliverer—a wonderful God King. In this Kingdom there will be no international conflicts. There will be no acts of terrorism. There will be no political corruption or corporate scandals. The streets in this Kingdom will always be safe and children will be able to walk into the homes of strangers and be treated like family. It is a time when all people will worship the same God and have the same laws. Suffice it to say it is a world that is vastly different from the one we live in today.

With this said, many, like yourself may wonder why a God who hates human suffering so much, would allow it to happen in such a great way. In other words, if God is so committed to mankind living in a world of peace and prosperity, why wouldn’t He intervene to prevent a catastrophic killer such as that which took place less than two weeks ago? This is a fair question. Now brace yourself for a shocking answer. God didn’t intervene because mankind didn’t want Him to. That’s right! Man does not want God to meddle in this world. This may sound crazy but it is true nevertheless.

Down through the ages man has always asserted his right to do things his way. Whether it was Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden paradise, or the children of Israel demanding to have a King instead of God as their ruler, every human being who has ever lived has fought to do things his or her way.

The tragedy with this line of thinking is that man’s way will only lead to failure—and there is a reason for this. The Bible states without ambiguity that man was never designed to be the moral authority in his own life. As difficult as this might be to believe, humanity simply does not have the proper equipment to navigate its own moral and ethical path. King Solomon, a man regarded by many as the wisest person who ever lived, came to understand this truth. When writing the book of Proverbs, Solomon made a profound observation about man and the moral choices he makes.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.
(Pro. 14:12)

Virtually all mankind has witnessed Solomon's words in action. We have seen good intentions play out to catastrophic results. Even Solomon's own life and the choices he made reflect this great moral law.

Solomon was not the only one to draw the conclusion that man was incapable of successfully managing his ethical path. The great prophet Jeremiah also pondered man's qualifications to rightly preside over his moral decisions. He concluded that man would invariably fall victim to his own moral and ethical devices. Notice his words.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. (Jer. 17:9)

Here, Jeremiah is stating that man cannot trust his own judgment because the seat of that judgment (the heart) is not trustworthy. But there is more. King David, who the Bible describes as "a man after God's heart" (Acts 13:22), expressed a profound truth about man's inability to grasp "right" and "wrong."

Who can understand his own error? (Psa. 19:12)

The question David asked in this verse is rhetorical. The truth of the matter is that no one can understand his own error. That is why man makes so many. The point here is that man's capacity to navigate his own moral path is nonexistent. Despite his assertions to the contrary, man was never designed to be the moral authority in his own life. The great prophet Jeremiah conveyed this absolute truth in words that couldn't be more clear.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps. (Jer. 10:23)

The words of Jeremiah state a truth that this world has rejected since the Garden of Eden. Simply put, man left to his own moral devices will choose the wrong path. Jesus Christ himself understood this absolute moral law, and His life reflected this understanding. The Bible states that when Jesus walked as a man on the earth, He refused to do something that every other man has done without thinking since the days of Adam and Eve. Jesus refused to direct His own moral steps. That's right! Even the Messiah did not rely on his own wisdom. Notice His words.

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me. (Jn. 5:30)

The Bible categorically asserts that the Great God, who made the heavens and the earth and all things, stands as the one and only unimpeachable Moral Authority in the universe. It is He who decides what is right and what is wrong, what is just and what is unjust, what is good and what is evil. Jesus totally understood this principle, and because of this, He totally surrendered His moral will to the Father. He did so because He absolutely knew that His Father was the source of all that possesses virtue and goodness. The point for man to draw from this is that the God of the Bible is infinitely wise, infinitely just, infinitely powerful, infinitely loving, and most infinitely MORAL. Man in his current state doesn't come close to "infinite" in any of these areas. However, there is yet another reason for man to tether himself to God and His moral compass.

An Unchangeable God

The Bible also declares with great force that the Infinite Creator of all that exists never changes His moral positions. In other words, what He hated four thousand years ago He hates today. The apostle James once described God as One in whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). With these words, James is stating that there isn't even a hint of movement with respect to God's wisdom. He doesn't change with the times. He is eternal. Time has no effect on Him or His moral compass.

However, man's moral compass is always in a state of flux because his values are constantly being influenced by the world around him – a world that is always changing. To illustrate this point, consider how values have changed in the United States over the past 50 years. Our opinions regarding sex,

marriage, and family would have astonished earlier generations. Today, these issues have been redefined by the proponents of a “new morality” – a morality that declares: “if it feels good, do it.”

Additionally, our contemporary world demands that all moral standards constantly adjust their view to conform to society’s conduct. As a result of this thinking, what we once thought was abhorrent moral behavior is now regarded as not only respectable, but even virtuous. The result of this thinking can be seen in every strata of society. Students now cheat in school without any sense of guilt. Adults now cheat in business because “that’s the way it is.” Marketing firms cheat and advertisers are brazen in their misrepresentation of products. Politicians cheat in an attempt to influence elections. Clergymen cheat to control their flocks.

The morality of today claims to all who would hear: cheating is ok as long as you have a “reason” for it and you don’t get caught. This is the same logic used by psychopaths, rapists, extortioners, drug pushers, and every other kind of lowlife our world has ever produced – and it possesses about the same moral weight. Sadly, today this belief is embraced by an entire generation.

“You Will Surely Die”

When God warned Adam and Eve about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He was identifying the very source of all human suffering. That source is man thinking he can decide for himself what is right and what is wrong, what is just and what is unjust, what is good and what is evil. Man has attempted to make these moral pronouncements for millennia and the result has always been untold suffering. The fact of the matter is that every tragic step man has taken has been guided by moral self-will. Every estrangement in human history is born out of self-will. Every divorce is born out of self-will. Every lie and every word of gossip is born out of self-will. Every obscenity and every profanity is born out of self-will. Every political debate is an argument over which man has the best solution to life’s problems and is born out of self-will. Every crime that has ever been committed is born out of self-will. Every war that was ever fought has been provoked by self-will. The point here is that man might know “good” and “evil,” but he will never be able to know good FROM evil. Six thousand years of human history has borne this out.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy to this thinking is that as a result man has lost access to his Creator. He has ostensibly rejected God and carved his own path. Therefore, when tragedy strikes, he calls on a host of deities to deliver him, but never the true God. This is because man has constructed his own religions. This sad truth even applies to Christianity. For the most part, people who claim to believe in the God of the Bible embrace an endless stream of man-made traditions in their worship. This despite the fact that Jesus Himself said that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in TRUTH” (Jn. 4:24).

The story of man asserting his right to be the moral authority in his life is tragic to say the least. But there is good news. The Bible indicates that mankind will eventually learn his lesson and will ultimately turn to his Maker and yield to Him. When he does his Heavenly Father will shower down upon him great blessings and even invite him to rule with Him. Perhaps the best way to describe man’s great potential is through the following short story.

The “Apprentice”

There once was a great master carpenter who specialized in making exquisite furniture. His skill was legendary and his services were sought all over the globe. As you looked at his work you could see the love and patience he put into it. Every piece was absolutely flawless. This great artisan spent decades perfecting his craft and his dedication rewarded him with a skill that was unmatched in all the world.

One day this great master asked his young apprentice if he would like to complete a very important project. His student was thrilled and readily accepted the invitation. However, before he could start, his teacher informed him that to succeed in this project he would have to diligently follow very specific

instructions. There could not be the slightest deviation from the specifications his teacher had laid out. The master even warned his pupil that any alteration of or deviation from his instructions would result in failure.

As the young apprentice began his work, he was mindful of his teacher's words. He painstakingly memorized all the notes and plans. He would also constantly review the many drawings of this wonderful piece of furniture. However, as the days turned into weeks, the young man became frustrated at how difficult the task had become. At this point he decided to make slight modifications to the plans. Unfortunately, each modification only served to compromise the project. When his master sought to help, the young man became angry and insisted that he could do it on his own. In the end, what started out to be a great masterpiece was ruined. Ruined because the young apprentice thought his skill, that was in its infant stages, could accomplish what his master had acquired over several decades.

Although this great master had every right to be angry with his pupil, he was more interested in knowing what his apprentice had learned. When he sought the answer to this query, the student told him: "I have learned to trust in you and to lean not on my own understanding." When the master heard these words he embraced his pupil and said: "What you have gained in failure is worth far more than anything made with hands. I rejoice in your success. I do so because now you are ready to be the master."

The story of this great master craftsman and his apprentice is very similar to one that is being played out every day. Only this time God is the Master and mankind is the pupil. With this in mind imagine what you would do if God gave you a chance to determine the destiny of the world. What an awesome task. What would you do? Would you accept this invitation? And what would you do to the world? Would you be willing to build its governments, to craft its laws, to define its values, and to inspire its faiths? Now imagine that when God extended this invitation He also informed you that He had already created a formula for total success in this endeavor. This formula was guaranteed to bring happiness to the human experience.

He now presents you with a choice. You may allow God to be your guide on this quest or you may forge your own path. At this point God cautions you to carefully consider your options. He then warns you that only His way will succeed. Furthermore, he explains that your way will only lead to destruction.

This is the same choice God presented to the first human family nearly 6000 years ago. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve thought they could manage this world without the aid of their Creator. It sounds unbelievable—but it is true none-the-less. As a result, mankind continues to walk a path that is only paved with misery. In the wake of this decision, governments continue to topple, laws continue to be mocked, values continue to degenerate while natural disasters continue to escalate. Mind you, it did not have to be this way (2Chron. 7:14). The scriptures are filled examples of God appealing to man to turn back to Him. Regrettably, man has essentially told Him to "butt out" of their business.

Where was God?

Where was God when the horrible tragedy that swept Southern Asia took place? The answer to this question may be too simple for most people to believe. The Great God of the universe was right where He has always been—in the third Heaven where His will is performed continually. In that kingdom there is only peace and abundance. The real question is: Where were we? And why have we been persuaded to reject our only hope and in essence, go it alone. This route has been traveled before, and its streets are only paved with misery.

Furthermore, the reason God allows horrible events like that of a catastrophic killer inflicting its will on millions of lives, is the same reason He allows so many other tragedies. He does so because He wants man to know what the world would look like without Him as its guiding moral presence. This is not God's world. Man decided he did not need God's wisdom and virtue while living in a garden some 6000 years ago. There, man decided to determine for himself what was "good" and what was "evil." And he continues to assert that "right" to this very day.

As a result of man's judgment, the innocent will always suffer. There will always be poverty. Families will be ripped apart by divorce. Ignorance and superstition will corrupt man's great potential. Justice will be perverted. Terrorists will kill at random. Children will be abducted from their homes and murdered. Sickness and disease will attack the weak. Tyrants will rule the earth. And great natural disasters will continue to ravage the planet.

However, mankind will eventually understand this wonderful truth. And when that day comes the Great God of heaven, the Master architect of all things will declare to His human family: "What you have gained in failure is worth far more than anything made with hands. I rejoice in your success. I do so because now you are ready to be the master."