

QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

From the *Lost Works of Porphyry*

On Sinning: Can we willingly err (i.e., can we knowingly make a mistake to harm ourselves)?

Suppose Plato is correct when he argues that no one errs willingly. That is, whenever we make a mistake (i.e., does an action that leads to our unhappiness), it is because we do not know what the right course of action is? According to Plato in the *Timaeus*, it is either through ignorance (i.e., lack of knowledge) or madness (i.e., mental illness) that someone does a bad action (86b). If this claim is true, however, this is not consistent with the Christian claim that we can willingly do bad things, i.e., "sin." According to the Bible, we have knowledge of what is good and what is bad (Genesis 3:22), and therefore we knowingly make ourselves unhappy EVERY single time we make a choice that affects our happiness. However, when even children make themselves unhappy, they do not always realize that they are doing something that will make them unhappy, or that is wrong, right?

First, if one accepts this view, is it not possible that as an adult I could do some actions and not know what the right action is?

Second, what can be said about mental illness? Do all humans, according to Christianity, including mentally ill people, possess knowledge of right and wrong, and if so, wouldn't God punish these people as well as adults? How can this view be shown to be consistent and plausible, especially given that there is nothing in the Bible that makes this exception (and given that God is compassionate, and, well, vengeful, see below)?

On Faith (or Belief) v. Good Works: First, which is it, and second, why is knowledge of God not better than a belief in God?

First, in the New Testament, Paul says, "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of law" (Romans 3:28). This amounts to claiming that faith in Jesus' being the Savior is a necessary and sufficient condition (as the logicians say) for entrance into heaven. The deeds of law must refer to the 613 Commandments of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (which by the way are part of the Christian Bible, so we have another question there!), but note that the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) are included in the 613 Commandments. Note here too that Jesus told a man to obey the Commandments (Matthew 19:17.) In another places, it says that faith alone is not sufficient, but good works are necessary (see e.g., Matthew 16:27, 1 Corinthians 3:8 and 13:2, and Hebrews 6:10). The first question then, is, which account is the correct account, and how can we know it? Related to this is, how can Paul be correct that following the Law does NOT matter and Jesus be correct that the Commandments DO matter?

Second, and more importantly, how could the stakes of our eternal lives rest merely on one BELIEF that we have (assuming we're doing the good works, to leave the first issue behind for now)? If we can have knowledge of what exists, what is knowable, and how we should live, as Plato, Plotinus, and Buddha have each asserted they possessed, then this knowledge would seem to be much more important than ANY belief we could have. According to the Bible, however, wisdom on earth is not only not urged for a Christian to obtain, it is actually claimed in some passages as being impossible for us to gain (see the next question).

On Wisdom: How can men be unable to obtain wisdom and able to obtain it?

At Job 28:12-13, it says, "But where can wisdom be found? Where can we learn to understand? Wisdom is not to be found among men; no one knows its true value." Then at Job 28:28, it says, "God said to men, 'To be wise, you must have reverence for the Lord. To understand, you must turn from evil.'" So within 14 verses, we see that wisdom is not possible for humans, but that a necessary condition for wisdom is that we have reverence for the Lord. This reverence is not necessarily sufficient for wisdom, from what is said here. Also, in Ecclesiastes, Koheleth (the author) says, "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under

heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith" (1:13), and "my wisdom remained with me" (2:9), and "the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (7:12). Lastly, in I Corinthians 12:4-11, it says that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone, where one of those workings and gifts is the expression of wisdom.

First, between the first two sets of verses, it talks about how valuable wisdom is, and this comes after it says that no one knows its true value -- so how can someone write down how valuable it is?

Second, if God is somehow dictating to the writer of this Scripture, does the writer not at this point know how valuable wisdom is, since God told the writer?

Third, if wisdom is intelligence and compassion, why didn't Gandhi have wisdom?

Fourth, if Jesus was really human, as some Christian traditions hold, wasn't he wise, so wasn't wisdom found among men at that point?

Fifth, how can the writer of Job and the writer of Ecclesiastes both be correct about wisdom, where the former says that wisdom is not to be found among men, and that wisdom is the search that God has given man, and wisdom gives life to them that have it?

On God's apparent attitude with respect to our obtaining knowledge of good and bad: Why would it be wrong for us to know what good and bad are? Also, we HAVE knowledge of good and bad?

First, God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any of the fruits of the trees in the Garden of Eden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and if they did so eat, they would die that same day (Genesis 2:16-17). The question is not why would God test Adam and Eve, but why would God not want Adam and Eve to have knowledge of good and evil? Is this knowledge not the most important knowledge that we as humans could have, in order to be the best people, live the best lives, raise our children in the best way possible, and so on? Why would God give us reason only to limit it and tell us, in effect, that we should not know about good and evil?

Second, after God discovers that Adam and Eve have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he says, "Now the man has become like one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad" (Genesis 3:22). So we have the knowledge of good and evil? Do children have this knowledge? Did Hitler, Stalin, Nero, Tim McVeigh, and Jeffrey Dahmer have this knowledge? Do mentally disabled, senile, or comatose persons have this knowledge? I myself do not feel that I have KNOWLEDGE of good and evil, even though I do acknowledge that I certainly have some opinions on ethical matters. I'm of the opinion, in fact, that if I KNEW what was good and bad in every case, I would not be able to act otherwise.

Third, God did not punish Adam and Eve in the way God said that God would -- God said they would not live through the day if they ate from the tree, and they had a son together. So did God lie (and so not be all-good), or change God's mind (and so not be immutable)?

On Jesus' claim to be God: What about the others who claim to be God? How do I know who is correct about his claim?

Jesus says, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30); interpreting "my Father" for God, Jesus claims to be God. However, in fact, there are others (e.g., Sri Krishna, in the *Bhagavad Gita* -- see *The Essential Mystics*, Peter Harvey, ed., pp. 44-45) who claim to be someone to whom we should all pray and who will answer our prayers and help us if we need it, implying that he is God. How do (or can) we know that Jesus and Sri Krishna are not both correct? How can we know that Sri Krishna is not the Deity to whom we should actually be praying and not Jesus? Note that if citing the Bible is proof that Jesus is the proper being to pray to, the opponent of the Christian can cite the Sri Krishna writings, so mere citing of the Bible is not convincing or decisive (not to mention question-begging).

On condoned (?) incest: Would it not appear that we are all the products of incest, given either Adam and Eve being our ancestors, or Noah and his family's ancestors?

From Genesis, God created Adam, and then created Eve from Adam. This implies that Adam and Eve have the same genetic structure, so that they are basically identical twins. Since they had intercourse, it is similar if not identical to incest. It certainly appears that God prohibits this elsewhere (See, e.g., Leviticus 18:6: "No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord."). So it seems that God both condoned and prohibited incest in the case of Adam and Eve. However, let us suppose that incest was not practiced after and as a result of Adam and Eve's existence. Take the case of Noah: God killed every single human being with the great flood, and only Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives were alive. Again, we have the case of incest. Why is this acceptable to God?

How can people who do not exist come back into existence?

In Genesis 6:1-4, it says, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days -- and also afterward -- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown." Then it says, The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth -- men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air -- for I am grieved that I have made them.' (Genesis 6:6-7) So the Nephilim people are condemned by God to be killed in a great flood. God tells Noah I am going to put an end to all people, (Genesis 6:13), so he should build an Ark to save himself and his family, and floods the world, supposedly killing all of its inhabitants at the time. It then says, "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:23). Later, in Numbers 13:33, written *after* the flood in the time of the Israelites, it says, "We saw the Nephilim there" (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim).

First, according to these passages, God can experience emotions such as grief, God can feel pain, and has a heart. Christian theology generally holds that God is nonphysical, so do we not have to interpret this metaphorically? If the Lord grieved at that time because he made man and they were wicked, where was God during the Holocaust? Also, how would God (assuming God is all-good) be able to kill humans and every living creature (except the beings on the ark) and have a clear conscience? How can God send someone to Hell and not feel bad about it, especially if the person was not aware of God? If God is all-powerful and can create any world God wishes to create, and is all-knowing, and so knows God will be unhappy with God's creation, why did God not just create the Earth (and universe) *after* the Flood, is God is happier with that version? Didn't God make a mistake, then, in creating the first creation (even though in Genesis God says that it is good? Also, why did God create anything at all, if God is perfect? Wouldn't a universe that only contained God be *truly* perfect? And, even if one can argue that God needed to create, or one has a good reason why God should have created anything, why is the following not a better universe than ours is: There's heaven and its inhabitants. These souls are those who would have been tested on Earth and really believed in God, even though there were many versions of God and reasons for doubt. So God rewards these souls in heaven, because God would know that these are the souls to whom God would grant grace. There is no Hell, nor is there any need for it. Why isn't this a better universe than ours?

Second, God said that he would destroy all creatures, and found that Noah was righteous and blameless (6:9), but why would God then order Noah to save two (or more) of each creature, when he said he kill them all? There's no explanation in the text for this. Also, what moral actions do creatures--which presumably lack a free will--ever carry out? How could God be upset about creating creatures if they cannot commit moral evil? Why would God create them just to (destroy them, and knowing that God would destroy them?

Third, if we assume that God is all-knowing and all-powerful, wouldn't God know that the humans would behave badly, and that he would regret creating both humans and the creatures as well? Why would God knowingly cause himself pain? And if God is all-powerful, wouldn't he have been able to create whatever creatures he wanted, or just not created them to begin with?

Fourth, if some parent regrets creating a son or daughter because the son or daughter is wicked and not listening to the parent, what would prevent the parent from putting an end to them, as God did? In fact, God commands us to stone to death rebellious teens (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Isn't God supposed to be an example of the way in which we should strive to be like (e.g., we're made in God's image, so the account goes)?

Fifth, and this is the main question, why was God's mission not accomplished (again, assuming that God is all-powerful and all-knowing)? Possible apologetic (reply): These are just stories, told by different people, so they're not meant to be consistent with each other. My reply: Then why should we take anything of what is said seriously, any more than we should believe fairy tales about the tortoise and the hare, Alice in Wonderland, or any other story? Possible apologetic: Because the Bible is God's word. My reply: Then we are being told in the Bible to believe in a God who is not all-powerful and/or all-knowing (see other questions as well), but who is thought to be all-powerful and all-knowing. Something must give, right? The question is, *what* should give and why?

Why does God's punishment or curse have no effect on certain (actually many) people?

Due to the Garden of Eden incident with the fig tree, God said to Adam, "You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make enough food for you" (Genesis 3:17).

First, if God has truly punished man, children who die young do not work hard to produce food, right?

Second, if a person makes a bunch of money early in his or her life, they will be comfortably well off and not need to work for the rest of his or her life, which is not working hard all of one's life, right?

Third, suppose (contrary to the passage that says "all your life") we interpret this passage as saying that we adults have to work our whole lives in some way or other to obtain food. Even so, there are people with very rich parents who have never had to work a day in their lives and get food. Why isn't God's curse still in effect? Is God not truly all-powerful then?

Fourth, it seems that it is just or fair to punish a wrongdoer assuming that he or she is responsible for the wrongdoing. But why is it just to punish every descendant that the wrongdoer will ever create in the future, in addition to the wrongdoer? For example, am I not unjust if I punish my grandkids for something that my kids did when they were young? How is this not analogous to what God is doing?

On Killing: Thou shalt not kill, except for unruly children?

The Bible states, "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst" (Deuteronomy 21:18-21; NAS). But the Bible also says as part of its Decalogue (also in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament) that we should not kill.

First, does the fact that most people find some action that is condoned in the Bible as barbaric, give us sufficient evidence to question not only this commandment, but also others in the Bible? If one's defense is, "Well, the Bible was written by humans, and therefore flawed," a great follow-up question then arises: How do we know WHICH part(s) of the Bible is/are flawed? Again, if one replies with, "Well, just use your reason to figure out what is and is not flawed," then a reasonable response seems to be, "Why should we not simply use our reason for figuring out whether Christianity makes sense? And, why then would it be rational and reasonable to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that we can drink any liquid and not be harmed if we are baptized and believe in Jesus, etc.?" (See related question below.)

Second, given that there are exceptions to the no killing rule that God has made us aware of, how can we be sure that the exceptions to killing in the Bible are the only exceptions, or that we are not supposed to be using our reason to figure out when killing is morally permissible or not?

On Holy Wars, why would and how could God EVER take anyone's side in a Holy War or any dispute that occurs in the Bible?

First of all, if humans have free will, and there is a dispute, say, between Christians and Muslims, then at any point in time, the Muslims may change their mind and come to believe in Jesus. So why would God cut that possibility short?

Second, if Christians believe (and if the Bible is correct then God believes the following as well) that the afterlife is all that really matters, and poverty, illness, being spit on, etc. are no big deal and in fact a small price to pay to gain entrance into heaven, then what does it matter, not only that there are some people who do not believe in Jesus as we live here, but also that some groups are attacking Christianity (physically in the past, or verbally now)? These things (being poor, sick, killed, etc.) do not matter if one has done God's will, so why would God ever condone anyone's attacking anyone else, when nothing achieved in this lifetime really matters (see, e.g., Mark 8:36), except that one believe in Jesus and do good works (or whatever the necessary and sufficient conditions are for being admitted to heaven)? (See related question to faith and good works, above.)

Third, how can it be compatible for one to believe that we should love one another as oneself (i.e., the greatest commandment) or that we should turn the other cheek when attacked, as well as that we should pray for God to help our culture/religion/country to win a war (see Psalms 5:10, Condemn and punish them [my enemies], O God; see also Psalms 17:13) or smite one's enemies (O Lord, you give me victory over my enemies Psalms 18:47)? It must be one or the other, right? Which one is it, and how do we know?

On counter-intuitive moral duties from the Bible: How could it be morally permissible to force a woman to marry a man who raped her, and not allow a divorce thereafter?

The Bible says, "If a man [meets] a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her he must marry the girl. He can never divorce her as long as he lives." Deuteronomy 22:28-29 (NIV)

First, if this quotation is a misprint or wrong, then how do we know it's wrong?

Second, how can we know that everything else written in the Bible is correct?

Third, how could this possibly be a good, sound, moral rule? Why do we prosecute men who rape women and think that that is just, if this passage is truly God's word?

On the human touch influencing what gets into the Bible:

Suppose cultural influences can be shown to affect what came to be in the Bible (and research convinces me, at any rate, that many prohibitions, miracles, and other things said in the Bible were chiefly or only said in order to be taken in a certain way by another group, or to convince others of Jesus' power, etc.) Now, if that is shown, then how do we know where this cultural influence stops and the real account of what really happened starts? For example, other people around the time of Jesus were said to be born of a virgin, to be crucified, others claimed to be or were referred to as the Messiah, others could do miracles, etc. [For example, Apollonius of Tyana was said to be a Messiah, born of a virgin, crucified, and resurrected: See

<http://www.mystae.com/restricted/reflections/messiah/terms.html#Apollonius>] So whom do we trust and how can we know that?

On the literal v. metaphorical or figurative reading of the Bible:

Around the year 1900, some people started reading the Bible literally; until then it was generally read metaphorically.

First, if we can show that some part of the Bible is without a doubt to be taken figuratively, then how can we be sure which parts in the rest of the work are to be taken literally and which ones figuratively? In fact, I think we can prove this, because Jesus himself says that he's only speaking in parables, which are not literal accounts of anything. Moreover, Jesus states that the kingdom of

heaven is like a mustard seed, not "is" a mustard seed. So that is metaphorical. How can we take these passages literally?

Second, do we then end up with just being able to use our reason to sort out what Jesus wants from us, or even whether to believe in any of it at all? Why not?

Third, Jesus says, "Everything is possible for the person who has faith" (Mark 9:23). How can we take this phrase literally? Can I do logically impossible things, such as create a rock so big that I myself cannot lift it, create a squared circle, or make myself not be identical to myself at the same time and in the same respect? How about other things, such as these: Can I bring people back from the dead, travel in time backwards, fly faster than the speed of light, arrange a meeting with God, or better yet, *make myself God*? Assuming that you agree with me that Jesus was not trying to tell us that EVERYTHING is possible with faith, then we have to take him figuratively speaking, right? And thus starts the slippery slope.

Fourth, if we are to take the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament literally, then a snake talked to Eve, and there are two incompatible accounts of creation in Genesis. So which account is correct and why would God deceive these inspired writers into having an inconsistency in their writing?

On slavery: Why would God endorse slavery?

The Bible says, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke [of slavery] count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." I Timothy 6:1-5 (KJV). Also, related to this, it says, "thou shalt take an aul [awl], and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever." Deuteronomy 15:17 (KJV). So slavery is morally permissible? Should we change our laws?

On the All-Good quality of God and his Son: Why would God endorse violence?

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with against his father, and the daughter against her mother" Matthew 10:34-35 (AV).

First, does one not have to come up with an *ad hoc* explanation as to why God, assuming he is all-good, would endorse violence against man? If we're all sinners and our earthly existence does not matter much, then why is it not enough to punish us upon our deaths?

Second, why would God, if God intends to punish the wicked by causing a natural disaster (e.g., tornado, flood, etc.), not be able to spare the believers and only punish the non-believers? If God is all-powerful, God can punish whomever he chooses, so why would indiscriminately punish the non-believers? According to the Bible, Jesus proved that he could bring a man back from the dead (e.g., Lazarus), so if God is all-powerful, why can God not make it so? If an apologist answers that we do not understand the ways of God ["Who knows the mind of God?" (Romans 11:34, 1 Corinthians 2:16 and Isaiah 29:14), or "with God all things are possible" Matthew 19:26], then how can we know ANYTHING about God from the Bible, since we cannot explain WHY God punished whom God punished, and what he is doing? In other words, if we're so ignorant, how can we ever explain ANY of God's actions, and how can we take the entire Bible seriously?

Third, after one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:51-52) So, we have Jesus saying that he comes to send a sword, set man at variance with father, daughter against mother, as well as that he who take the sword will perish by the sword. How can we explain this (*especially* because if we

assume that Jesus did not lie, and he truly used the sword at some point, he was punished by being put on a cross!)? If we explain it by saying that the first passage is metaphorical or figurative, see the other question above on metaphorically v. literally interpreting the Bible.

Fourth, when a man ran up and knelt before Jesus and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life? Jesus responds, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." (Mark 10:17-18) Why would Jesus say this, assuming that he is the Son of God, or God (as part of the Trinity)? We have Jesus' own words, denying that he is truly good. Why is that?

Fifth, God killed every living creature other than Noah, his family, and the creatures on the ark. How can not killing be one of the commandments, if God doesn't live by God's own rules?

Sixth, why would God endorse stoning rebellious sons if God is not violent (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)?

Seventh, why would God endorse slavery, which implies beatings and whippings (1 Timothy 6:1-5; see also Deuteronomy 15:17)?

Eighth, why would God essentially let Satan have his way with Job to make him suffer (and kill his wife and children), just to see how he handles much suffering, just to see what happens (Job 1:6-19)?

[Why does God need to ever "test" anyone, because God is all-knowing and knows how everything will turn out, no?]

On the All-Knowing quality of God and his Son: Why would God not know how nature works?

The Bible says, "The next day, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' In the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter said to Jesus, Rabbi, look! The fig tree has withered!" Mark 11:12-14, 20-21 (NIV; cf. Matthew 21:18-19).

First, assume Catholicism [or any sect of Christianity that believes in the Holy Trinity] is true: If Jesus, the Son of God is part of the Holy Trinity, and God is all-knowing (See John 6:64: "Jesus knew from the very beginning who were the ones that would not believe and which one would betray him"; and Matthew 12:27: "So go to the lake and drop in a line. Pull up the first fish you hook, and in its mouth you will find a coin worth enough for my Temple tax and yours."), then why would Jesus not know how nature works? Why would Jesus not know BEFORE he saw the tree whether or not it had figs on it, *that* it did not have figs on it, *why* it did not have figs on it, and *when* it would eventually have figs on it, if ever? These questions are especially difficult to answer, given that it is claimed that Jesus is aware that figs are in season in the summer, and not at other times (Luke 21:29-30, Mark 13:28, and Matthew 24:32).

Second, was Jesus hungry, so that he was somehow offended by the tree, so that because of his hunger, he wanted to curse the tree? Is this not childish and/or juvenile?

Third, isn't this really out of character, for a person who can fast for 40 days and nights, and turn down ruling the Earth, and can create food as a miracle? How can one possibly explain this?

If God is All-Knowing and observes our actions so God can judge us later, why would God not know where Adam and Eve are and how they found out they were naked?

First, if God is all-knowing, why would he not know where Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 3:9) [If God is "testing" Adam by asking him where he is, God is intentionally deceiving Adam, and that is inconsistent with God's being All-Good or perfect.]

Second, God said, "Who told you that you were naked?" (Genesis 3:11)

If God is All-Knowing, why would God use fallacious reasoning throughout the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament?

The Argument from Force (*Argumentum ad Baculum*) is a fallacy (i.e., form of fallacious reasoning) that is committed when the arguer uses force to attempt to win an argument. For instance, "If you don't believe that pigs can fly, I'll punch you!" It is pretty obvious that by getting someone to agree that you're right about your conclusion only because you threaten them with physical or psychological violence or abuse is to use faulty reasoning. The Biblical point that is rehearsed over and over in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is that if you do not believe in God and do what God says, God will punish you in many and various ways.

First, why should these threats of punishment convince anyone that God exists, that God is All-Knowing, or that God is All-Good?

Second, if these threats are the only reason one believes in God or Jesus, wouldn't God or Jesus know that one is only trying to avoid pain and punishment, and why should God/Jesus reward that person with eternal life because they were too afraid to question the Bible's reasoning?

Why would God, being All-Knowing and All-Good, be sexist?

The Ten Commandment, which believers claim that God commanded, is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, though shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:17 (AV) Here, a man's wife is listed as property, or a thing. Another reference: "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands" (Ephesians 5:22; see also Colossians 3:18). The Bible also says, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." I Corinthians 14:34-35 (NIV). If we lowly humans in the late 20th century and now the 21st century think that it is sexist to think of women as a man's property, how could God possibly think of a woman as a man's property?

Why would Jesus be sorrowful the night before he dies for the sins of all of humanity (especially given that he is all-knowing and realizes why and how he is going to die), and wants to reconcile humans to God?

Socrates faced death very reasonably; that is, he told others around him to calm down and stop crying; that one should die in good, omened silence (*Phaedo* 117d-e). Jesus, on the other hand, thought by many to be the Son of God, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, was sorrowful in a garden the night before he was put to death. For example, he said, "My soul is sorrowful even to death" (Mark 14:34). It continues: "He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will'" (Mark 14:35-36). Second example: Matthew says he began to be sorrowful and very heavy and then said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death; tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:37-38).

First: Why would someone who KNEW that he was saving the world, dying for peoples' sins, doing such a great service to humanity, be sorrowful, when he gets to join his Father in Heaven (assuming that he's not God, as the Holy Trinity doctrine holds that he is)?

Second, if Jesus is all-knowing, Jesus certainly would have known that people would carry through with the plan, how it would go, what it was like to die, etc., right?

Third, in a related point, why would he say while on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) If Jesus is the Son of God, and he's all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, and carrying out his mission, then how could he possibly ask this question?

Fourth, if one assumes that Jesus is not God, but the Son of God, and so different from God, then why would God put Jesus through this? God is all-powerful, all-good, and all-knowing, so why wouldn't God simply make the experience painless for Jesus? Can a suffering being be perfect?

Fifth, from the Matthew passage quoted in the third question above, why is there Jesus' will and God's will? That's two wills, and if the Holy Trinity is true, how can this be explained?

Sixth, Matthew says that he asked God three times not to be crucified (Matthew 26:39-44). If we get whatever we pray for as long as we believe in Jesus (see Mark 12:24, quoted in the next section), and ask in the Lord's name, why wouldn't God grant the same to Jesus? After all, Jesus definitely believes in Jesus, and was asking God not to be the one to be sacrificed, so why wouldn't God grant his prayer?

Why aren't many more prayers answered by the faithful?

In Mark 12:24, Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours." Certainly, every day, some prayers have obviously not been answered, but this passage does not allow for other explanations or qualifications, such as, prayers are granted *only* for true believers, or prayers are granted *unless* God feels like testing you, etc. does it?

How do we know which are the false prophets and which are the true ones?

Jesus says in Mark 13:22-23, "False messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders in order to mislead, if that were possible, the elect. Be watchful! I have told it all to you beforehand."

First, how do we know that Muhammad, or Joseph Smith and (others who claim to be prophets) are *not* the false prophets that Jesus warns us about?

Second, it is also said that "there will be others besides me who will be true prophets" (See, e.g., I Corinthians 12:8-10), and there were many prophecies from more than one prophet in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. So, how do we know that these more recent prophets are wrong?

Third, it is also said that "one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes" (I Corinthians 12:11), where all of these includes prophecies, the expression of wisdom, knowledge, faith, mighty deeds, and so on (12:8-10). So how can Jesus be correct that there will be false prophecies, if the Spirit produces all of them?

How can there be light without any stars (or man-made lamps)?

In Genesis, "God said let there be light and there was light (1:3). But then God created stars afterwards" (1:14-15), and *after that* God made the two larger lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night (Genesis 1:16)

First, how did God create light before he created the stars, sun, and moon?

Second, the moon is not a light, but a reflector of light. If the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is God's Word, how can it be factually wrong? If it is factually wrong, then (1) how can we trust the rest of the Bible since there's a mistake, and/or (2) how can we continue to think that God is all-knowing?

Third, the passage continues, "Evening passed and morning came -- that was the fourth day" (Genesis 1:19). How can days and evenings be passing if the sun did not exist until the third day?

Only 144,000 souls will be saved?

How can only 144,000 people/souls be saved, as it says in Revelation 7:4 (especially when it says that 12 tribes of Israel will be sealed or saved)? Are any or all of the denominations of Christianity one or more of the tribes of Israel and/or are all the twelve tribes of Israel still around (presumably they are not), assuming that if you believe that Jesus is your savior, you are supposed to be able to be chosen to go to heaven? If there are 1,026,501,000 Roman Catholic Christians and 316,445,000 Protestant Christians in the world, then 144,000 seems a very low number to save, especially if Jesus truly loves all his children and all it takes is faith and (or not) good works, does it not? (Source for number of Christians: http://www.spiritualworld.org/christianity/how_many.htm)

God changes versus God does not change?

In the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, God changes his mind after talking to Abraham about his proposed action to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-33), and at other points (e.g., he does not carry out his threat to Adam and Eve, that they will die by the day's end). However, it is a popular belief that God never changes. Which one is it, and how do we know?

How can God hate, when God does/will not allow us to hate?

1 John 3:15: "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." Also, Paul says, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings of the which I tell you before [sic], as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21 KJV). But God (or the Lord) hates six things and detests seven things, as it is said in Proverbs: "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers." (Proverbs 6:16-18) See also, Deuteronomy 12:31: "You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods". And, Deuteronomy 16:22: "and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the Lord your God hates." Lastly, Psalm 11:5: "The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked [Or [The] Lord [, the Righteous One, examines the wicked,]] and those who love violence his soul hates." How can we explain or understand this inconsistency?

How could God be jealous?

It says at Exodus 34:14: "Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. It might be worse than it first appears: Besides just being a negative trait we might not want to see in a God, God might be being hypocritical, unless Paul is wrong, when he says, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings of the which I tell you before [sic], as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21 KJV; emphasis added).

If Jesus is perfect, how could Jesus command his disciples to steal a colt?

"... [Jesus] sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village opposite, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this, 'The Lord has need of it.' So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.' And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt they set Jesus upon it." (Luke 19:29-35; cf. Mark 11:1-7 and Matthew 21:1-7)

First, this passage indicates stealing, since it is claimed that the colt was tied up and its owners did not give permission to the disciples. Why is it morally permissible for Jesus to break a commandment?

Second, if Jesus is all-powerful, why couldn't he just create a colt for himself, or create money to buy one? If Jesus is all-knowing, why couldn't he prove to the owner that he has a really good reason to take the colt?

God changed his mind about what commandments there are?

There is the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, but this seems to change -- see below.

First, why in Matthew 19:18-19 does Jesus only mention 7 of the 10 commandments to a man who asks what he must do to gain eternal life? Jesus says there, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt commit no adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother: and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 19:18-19; KJV) Did God (assuming Jesus knew the mind of God, or was the Son of God, or was God) change his mind about what commandments there were since the time of Moses?

Second, why in Matthew 22:37-40 does Jesus mention a commandment that is not mentioned in the original 10 commandments? He says, "the greatest commandment in the law is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Third, in *The Catholic Church Has the Answer*, by Paul Whitcomb (TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford, 1986), it says that Jesus proved His divinity by His impeccable holiness and the flawless perfection of His doctrine (p. 7). If Jesus has flawless perfection when it comes to doctrine, why is he not consistent when he describes the Law? How can it be that there are (1) 7 Commandments AND (2) Ten Commandments, AND that (3) only the greatest Commandment (which is not mentioned in either list) really matters?

Why do Christians still have any money if they are truly Christians and desire eternal life?

In Matthew, Jesus (paraphrasing) says to the man who wants to know what he has to do in order to have eternal life, obey these seven commandments. The man then says, "'All these things I have kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?' Jesus responds, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And again I say unto you, 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'" (Matthew 19:20-24; KJV)

First, how can anyone with much money at all expect to gain eternal life?

Second, why does the Vatican, the Church of Latter Day Saints, etc., have billions and billions of dollars and really expensive churches, Temples and Cathedrals, if they value the Bible and do not value money? Shouldn't all that money be used to help the poor?

God is not God for the dead?

Jesus says in Matthew 22:32 (and Mark 12:27, Luke 20:38), God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

First, isn't God still God of the universe, whether or not someone believes in God, is alive, or is dead?

Second, if God is not the God of the dead is supposed to mean, God does not care about the dead, then why does Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? For instance, why wouldn't Jesus merely convince the mother of Lazarus that it doesn't matter that Lazarus is dead, or why didn't he say to her that he is not the Lord of the dead?

Third, what sense can be made of the realm of Hell, where non-believers are supposed to go, if God does not care about them?

Fourth, how can God be or have unconditional love and not care about people who do not believe in God, especially someone like an agnostic who thinks that there is not enough evidence to believe in God? (The agnostic is not a rabid atheist who goes through this life upset that people DO believe in God - they are just not sure God exists and do not believe in God.)

Do Christians really believe that drinking something harmful will not hurt them? And why do we need medicine anymore, assuming there are believers in Jesus who are baptized?

According to Mark, chapter 16 (in the part that was added to the Gospel of Mark 300 years later), after Jesus is resurrected, he says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15-18).

First, why don't Christians put their money where their mouths are? If there have been those who have taken or do take Jesus' own words seriously, and are baptized believers, why has no one shown us that Jesus is correct, by drinking a gallon of gasoline, some hemlock, some arsenic, etc.?

Second, if it says these people will not be harmed, why shouldn't we be able to prove that this statement is true, and as many times as is necessary to convince the whole world?

Third, why should someone not challenge Bishops, ministers, elders, the Pope, and others, to really show us the truth of Jesus' words?

Fourth, on the other hand (which is much more likely), if we can prove Jesus' words are wrong by someone's death, then what else can we question that we see written in his name?

Fifth, do you really think that a frog (i.e., a creature to whom we should preach the gospel) would understand us if we preach to it?

Sixth, why do we need medicine anymore, if baptized believers could just lay their hands on the sick and heal them? This would solve the medical insurance debacle as well as save people a lot of money. We could also prove that what Jesus is said to have said is either correct, or incorrect in this case as well.

How can we be forgiven for anything by Jesus or God, but also NOT be forgiven?

In reference to God, Isaiah says, "And Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts" (Isaiah 22:14). Jesus says, "that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:12); "Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Matthew 12:31); "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come" (Matthew 12:32); and "And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10). However, in *The Catholic Church Has the Answer*, by Paul Whitcomb (TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford, 1986), it says that Christ will always forgive and return to a sinner who approaches Him with sincerity in the Sacrament of Penance (p. 23).

First, how can Jesus both forgive everyone and not forgive certain people for doing certain actions?

Second, what would make it impossible for one to be sincerely sorry in Hell, so that Jesus might be approached at *that* point (See also the God is not God for the dead question above).

Can God not keep his Word, and if so, isn't lying an imperfection?

In *The Catholic Church Has the Answer*, by Paul Whitcomb (TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford, 1986), it says that Catholics know that, strictly speaking, God never owes us anything (p. 26). This implies that God can say things such as, "Ask and it shall be given to you, yours is the Kingdom of Heaven," and that even if you have fulfilled every single law, every word of the Bible (which is

arguably in fact impossible, given the inconsistencies, and the unwillingness for people to kill their sons if they are unruly, etc.), God doesn't have to admit you into heaven.

First, how is anyone able to see this statement as anything but a cop-out?

Second, wouldn't it be true that not keeping one's word is an imperfection, and if so, how could God possibly be able to do this while remaining perfect?

Third, how would it make sense to claim that we should aim to tell the truth in all our dealings, given this supposed divine loophole?

What ascends to heaven? Our body or our soul?

You might think that your soul ascends to heaven, but it appears from the Bible in certain spots that the body ascends: "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' [feathers], and his nails like birds' [claws]" (Daniel 4:33; my emphasis). See also, "and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will" (Daniel 5:21; my emphasis).

First, what sense can at all be made of MY BODY's going to heaven, if we mortals routinely watch everyone's body at death not move, but instead be burned, buried, or, in general, perish?

Second, assuming a physical body ascends to heaven, would I need food and drink in heaven, and how do we know this?

Third, why does it say in Ecclesiastes 3:21, "How can anyone be sure that a man's spirit goes upward while an animal's spirit goes down into the ground?" and, "There is no way for us to know what will happen after we die?" (3:22)

What's so special about heaven?

First, even if only my soul goes to heaven, will I have memories? If I take my memories with me, so to speak, I will always be able to remember bad things that happened to me, or others whom I loved, right? This would seem to be neither heavenly nor desirable.

Second, if nothing changes in heaven, it would certainly seem to be theoretically possible for one to get bored of the same, elated, continual, experience (assuming that is what heaven is), would it not? No matter what experience you've ever had, if you experience nothing but that experience continually, you will eventually get used to it, and find it to be expected, the usual, the norm, etc. Will you not need more excitement, stimulation, etc., at that point?

Third, what sense can be made of Leibniz' comment, where he tries to justify the presence of evil on earth: "It is true that one may imagine possible worlds without sin and without unhappiness, and one could make some such Utopian romances; but these same worlds again would be very inferior to ours in goodness." (from *Theodicy*, Open Court: La Salle, 1985, p. 129.) Heaven would seem to be a place that is without sin and without unhappiness, so if our world (i.e., Earth right now) is superior to heaven in goodness, what sense can be made of that? If it's true that we can only know what goodness is by knowing or experiencing evil, then must there not be evil in heaven? Lastly, note that if one says that Leibniz is wrong about his argument, then it is not true that evil is necessary for this world, and so, assuming God exists, whence comes evil in this world? How could a perfectly good God create evil on earth, if this is the best creation God could have made?

Fourth, suppose it is possible for someone to desire to go to Hell. Would not heaven be the appropriate place for this person/soul/body to be placed?

Fifth, "Jehovah said unto Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not'" (Exodus 16:4; my emphasis). Also, God put the stars in the firmament of heaven in Genesis. So heaven is a physical place. How can a soul go anywhere or be anywhere (such as heaven or hell), if it is an immaterial thing? Next, related to this passage, it says, "Thou shalt not make

unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness [of any thing] that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4; see also Deuteronomy 5:8), but it was just said that Jehovah would rain bread from heaven. So should we not ever make bread again? **Sixth**, if, as most fundamentalist Christians like to do, we take the Bible literally, there are also stones in heaven (Joshua 10:11) -- why would we need these for eternal happiness? The sun is there (Joshua 10:13), thunder (1 Samuel 2:10), a whole city went up there (Judges 20:40), water and birds (2 Samuel 21:10), foundations ["Then the earth shook and trembled, The foundations of heaven quaked And were shaken, because he was wroth" (2 Samuel 22:8)], "a heaven of heavens" -- whatever that means (!?) (1 Kings 8:27), fire (?) (2 Kings 1:12), a throne (Psalms 11:4), doors (Psalms 78:23), food (Psalms 78:24), pillars (Job 26:11), war with a dragon (!?) (Revelation 12:7), white horse (Revelation 19:11), armies (Revelation 19:14), and it's possible to get there in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1 and 2:11). Are we already IN heaven right now, if we have birds, bread, water, stones, pillars, foundations, stones, war, white horses, armies, etc.? Why does it seem an awful lot like heaven is written of as if it were simply the sky, or outer space? Lastly, hell is said by Jesus to be a place where "the worms that eat [the body] never die, and the fire that burns them is never put out" (Mark 9:48). If fire is a bad thing, why is it in heaven as well as in hell (2 Kings 1:12)?

Seventh, more proof that heaven is physical and created: Physical: "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been [any such thing] as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?" (Deuteronomy 4:32; my emphasis). There is no one end to the other of something that is non-physical, right? Created: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven" (Genesis 2:4; my emphasis)

Eighth, if heaven is so special, why does Jesus say, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Mark 13:31; cf. Matthew 24:35 and Luke 21:33). Two interpretations seem likely: either there will be no more heaven, in which case it makes no difference if we go there, or Jesus is claiming that all stars, galaxies, etc. and space itself is going away. Astronomers are relatively sure that the earth will not be here anymore when the Sun expands before becoming a brown dwarf, which would imply that Jesus is correct when he says that earth will pass away. However, this brings up another point: According to Christian theology (Revelation), heaven will supposedly be rebuilt on earth by God after Armageddon -- why would God rebuild on a trashed planet with no star to warm and sustain it? But if there IS no heaven, then there won't be any stars left to sustain any planet anywhere right?

Is God physical?

God made man from dust and water, i.e., mud, from a river on earth (Genesis). If God has a face, then God must be physical: "if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Also, he says he fills heaven and earth, so how can he create everything he fills? "'Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him?' saith Jehovah. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' saith Jehovah." (Jeremiah 23:24) How can a non-physical thing fill anything else, when it does not occupy space? So God must be at least physical, even if God has a soul.

God cannot rest after creating the universe, if Aquinas' (i.e., a Christian Doctor and Saint) proof for God's existence is correct, right?

Suppose Aquinas is correct that the first mover is God, and that something cannot put something else into motion without itself actually being in motion. So God had to be actually in motion to be the first mover of the second mover. Suppose also that the standard Christian theology is correct, that God never changes. Then it is impossible for God to rest, since God would have to remain in motion.

First, is the Bible incorrect about creation?

Second, is Aquinas wrong about God's being the first mover?

Third, is Christian theology wrong about God's nature being immutable, given that God must remain actually in motion, paradoxically, in order not to change?

Fourth, if God is in motion, then how could God not be in time (assuming someone, such as Aquinas believes that God is beyond time)?

Is God beyond being?

If Anselm's (i.e., a Christian Saint) definition of God (something than which nothing greater can be thought) is correct, then Plotinus' view, that the highest principle possible would actually be beyond being, is really what God is (or rather is beyond), right? Claiming that God necessarily exists implies that he cannot not exist, which limits God. Just as God is said to be eternal, or beyond time, assuming eternality is superior, why would not God be beyond being as well? The problem with answering in the affirmative is that the notion that God is beyond being conflicts with the Bible, where it says, "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14). So is the Christian Saint correct, or the Bible, and how do we know?

Is God flawed in essence, according to Descartes' ideas about perfection?

Descartes (a true man of the Church, according to Christopher Biffle, author of A Guided Tour of Rene Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy, p. 3) says in his *Meditations* I know that I doubt and I desire, that is, that I lack something and that I am not wholly perfect (*Meditations on First Philosophy*, Donald Cress, trans., Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis, 1979, p. 30).

First, if we agree with Descartes that I am imperfect because I doubt and desire, what does this imply for God, if God *desires* or *wants* anything at all (e.g., to grant goodness, good things, grace, forgiveness, etc.) for us?

Second, isn't God imperfect by desiring or needing anything at all (see also the questions involving God's being a jealous God)? Why is this a state of perfection?

If the Apostles were truly aware of Jesus' teachings, and really believed that he was the Son of God, why weren't ANY of them present for his crucifixion?

I have never heard an explanation as to why the Apostles were not present for Jesus' crucifixion, to pray for him, thank him, praise him, help him out, or encourage him, etc.

First, if it is answered that they stayed away because they were too worried about dying, then apparently they missed one of the most significant messages of Jesus, which is that this Earthly life is only good insofar as one does the right thing(s) in order to join with their Father again in heaven. Judas and Peter denied Jesus, so it makes some sense that these guys weren't present, but the rest of the Apostles failed to show up as well. If the Apostles did not have faith in Jesus (e.g., they fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed him and Peter denied him three times, etc.) and they were living in his presence, how impressive is this for non-believers who are told that Jesus was amazing and the Son of God? Also, Jesus says, "whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35). So, if the Apostles didn't lose their lives for Jesus and follow the Gospel, then why should we?

Second, the Apostles were not even at the tomb to witness the resurrection, in Mark's account of Jesus' life. If much of Christianity is predicated on Jesus' rising from the dead, why would the Apostles not be right there to witness the resurrection, and even have others present so they could be first-hand witnesses of this great happening? I wouldn't have left my friend's side if I really believed in him, and thought I could be of any assistance, but if the Son of God is my friend, I am certainly not going to fail *him*. So, what gives?

Didn't Jesus (according to the NT) err in telling us when the Second Coming is coming? Shouldn't the Second Coming have already come?

Jesus says: (1) "Listen!" says Jesus. I am coming soon!" (Revelation 22:7; cf. 22:12 and 22:20) (2) "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power." (Mark 9:1; cf. Matthew 16:28, Luke 9:27) And (3) "Amen, I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until all these things have taken place." (Mark 13:30, my emphasis; cf. Matthew 24:34, Luke 21:32)

First, (1) Are Mark, Matthew, and Luke mistaken about what Jesus said? Or (2) Is Jesus not really coming? Or (3) Was Jesus wrong? Or (4) Is some option true?

Second, is there any other way in which to interpret "soon," "there are some standing here who will not taste death," or "this generation will not pass," in order to hold on to the view that the Second Coming is still on its way?

Third, there have been many people who have actually *claimed* to be Jesus, coming back to earth, and we have put these people for the most part in mental institutions. How will we suddenly accept the real Jesus even if he actually comes back, especially given that he preaches love to all? Isn't the real Jesus of the second coming in for another negative experience with everyone here on earth? Isn't it conceivable that even many Christians would call him a blasphemer and a heretic?

Fourth, there have been many who have said that Jesus was coming, and he didn't come, starting, well, according to Mark, with Jesus (then Paul, John, and many others) thereafter. There were those who predicted that it would be in 1000 C.E., and also in 2000 C.E., but they were wrong. Should we ignore every warning then, and just wait for the real Second Coming to happen?

Fifth, notice that Jesus does NOT say that HE is going to be coming or establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, but that the Kingdom of God will come into power. This is strange, given the way in which Revelation describes his key role in the transformation.

Why is the Bible so inconsistent and difficult to understand, if God is all-knowing and wants God's creation to know about God?

First, why are there over 33,000 sects of Christianity ([click here for reference](#)), if it is clear who Jesus was, and what his life and message were about? How could people *who lived while Jesus was alive* fail to understand what Jesus' life and message were about, including his Apostles?

Second, why do so many rational people not believe in God, assuming rational people are in some sense closer to being all-knowing than irrational people?

Third, wouldn't God want God's Word to be very clear, consistent, and convincing?

Fourth, why then would God change God's mind (see above), saying both that the Law (613 Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Commandments) is important to follow in the New Testament and that the Law is not important to follow?

Fifth, in short, why would it be possible for someone to find this many questions about the Bible if it were so crystal clear, consistent, and convincing? (If your answer is that the Bible was written by fallible humans, the reply to that is that one should use one's reason and decide for him or herself which passages make sense and which do not.)

BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I would like to make it clear that this series of questions is not intended to prove that Jesus was not a good person, or that everything that Jesus supposedly claims in the New Testament is false and unsound advice as to how to live. If people listened to Jesus and really put his words into action when he said, Love one another as yourself and that we should focus on our own faults before criticizing others, among other things, the world would admittedly be a much better place. In fact, Jesus may have been a misunderstood mystic whose life and words were used by others for their own purposes. Be that as it may, the way in which Christianity is practiced as an organized religion and its use in politics is arguably unjustifiable. For example, organized Christianity has rules and rituals that are not mentioned in the Bible -- see, e.g., the history of the Catholic Church that made up new rules about the afterlife and frequency of church attendance in order to increase the offerings; the amazingly coincidental revelations from God to the LDS leaders that spoke against polygamy when the Federal Government threatened not to admit Utah into statehood unless

polygamy was not accepted in its organization, or their switch after civil rights in the 1960's to allow African Americans to be elders, etc.).

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