

Bible Questions and Answers



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Fellowship
BIBLE CHURCH

God's Love and Punishment of Evil



One formulation of a classic question that often arises in witnessing to atheists and others who object to Christianity.

Question on God's Love



- ❧ If God is loving, how could he command the Israelites to wipe out whole cities of Canaanites during the conquest of Joshua?
- ❧ It is necessary to remind our questioner that God is love, but not *only* love. God is also **just** in his innate, unchanging nature. He despises evil and expects it to be punished by governmental authorities, and He does so Himself. He is a good judge, not a wimpy one.

God's Love and Justice



- ☞ Genesis 15:13-16. The relevant portion for our discussion is the last part – “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (NKJV) Their sin “has not yet reached its full measure” (NIV).
- ☞ God was longsuffering, in effect giving them an opportunity to repent. Unfortunately, that same opportunity can be used to dig the grave even deeper.

God's Love and Justice



- ❧ The Amorites did not repent, so God used Israel to judge them. One of the things they did was to sacrifice their children in a fire offering to their false gods. The children were killed in this ritual.
- ❧ Also remind our questioner that God did similar kinds of severe punishment upon *Israel* when they began to sin in the same way as the Canaanites before them. It went both ways – not just one way!

Examples in the North



- ❧ Ahab was an evil king in Israel's northern kingdom. He followed idols and did like the Amorites had done before him (1 Kings 21:25-26). He had a brief repentance, and then his son Ahaziah picked up where he left off.
- ❧ Ahaziah was just like his father and mother, and like his forerunner Jeroboam. He made God angry because of His disobedience and wickedness (1 Kings 22:52-53).

Examples in the North



- ❧ A good portion of the northern kingdom was guilty of child sacrifice and idolatry (2 Kings 17:17). Thus, God destroyed them and took their remnants to Assyria.

Examples in the South



- ❧ Ahaz, leading the southern kingdom in Judah, sacrificed his children in the fire just like the nations whom God had destroyed during the conquest (2 Kings 16:3).
- ❧ Manasseh in the southern kingdom led the people in idolatry and child sacrifice (2 Chronicles 33:1-9), so much so that they were worse than the nations before them.
- ❧ God destroyed them with the Babylonian captivities and war. God is consistent (Jer. 32:34-36; Ezekiel 20:31, 37).

Bottom Line



- ❧ If God did not punish sin in such cases or in any case, He would be neither just nor loving, because wickedness would flourish, and the relatively innocent victims would have no hope of vindication or justice to be served. God would thus show that He hates humanity.
- ❧ IOW, true love must be coupled with true justice, or you have neither love nor justice.

Bottom Line



- ☞ Happily, God joins lovingkindness (mercy) with judgment so that those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ have their sins justly paid for by Christ and in this way can enjoy life – free of sin's dominion – and a promised eternity with God.
- ☞ Also remind the questioner that all people die, and it is God's decision as to the timing. If He chooses to permit some to be extinguished from this life sooner than others, so be it.

A Young Person Asks...



A very imaginative question about a fruit pie and the book of
Genesis.

Question about Fruit Pies



- ❧ What would have happened if Adam and Eve had made a fruit pie with the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil and eaten both?
- ❧ Notice this statement is in the form of “if...then.” If they made such a pie and ate it, then what would have resulted? The “if” part did not happen, so this is a hypothetical.
- ❧ Someone could say, “Who cares about what-if?”

Question about Fruit Pies



- ❧ The text of Scripture indicates the following.
- ❧ Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil consigned Adam and Eve to death – immediately.
- ❧ They were now sinners, not because of the chemical composition of the fruit but because they had disobeyed God's command. They had exhibited pride, and they did not love God (else they would have obeyed).
- ❧ See Genesis 2:17.

Question about Fruit Pies



- ❧ Subsequently eating the fruit of the tree of life would have consigned Adam and Eve to be alive forever, and *that* in sin. This is according to Genesis 3:22. That is a bad fate.
- ❧ Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever--" (Gen. 3:22 ESV)
- ❧ God sent man out of the garden and set an angelic guard on the tree of life to prevent any man from getting to it.

Question about Fruit Pies



- ☞ Consequently, the answer to the mixed-fruit pie question is that since a mixed fruit pie would contain both fruits – the sin-producing one and the life-producing one, Adam and Eve would have been consigned forever to a life in sin as indicated in Gen. 3:22. If you are realistic about how life is, that would be very bad.
- ☞ God is merciful to us to cut short our sin by making our sinful flesh mortal. He also keeps to His word to assign a stiff penalty to sin (death). And, He provides a way for us to live with Him by being saved from our sins.

Question about Fruit Pies



- ❧ There is a question in my mind as to whether a single bite of the tree of life fruit would suffice (as I assumed above), or if regular consumption was required to maintain the life-giving power of the fruit.
- ❧ I tend to think the latter because our connection to God's life must be ongoing, not just one time. And if that is the case, then a single piece of the pie would not cause them to live forever. Then, there would be no difference to what in fact occurred in Genesis 3.

2 Corinthians 5:1



A question about the resurrection body.

The Texts in Question



- ❧ **2 Corinthians 5:1** - For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- ❧ **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Defining the Question



- ❧ The question seems to be this: 1 Thessalonians teaches that we receive our new glorified body at the event called the Rapture.
- ❧ If we are alive when that happens, we are instantly changed to the glorified state. See also 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.
- ❧ If we are already dead when that happens, our bodies will be resurrected from the grave and rejoined to our spirits, which come with Jesus at the Rapture for that purpose.

Defining the Question



- ❧ Then in 2 Corinthians 5:1, when it speaks of us dying (our earthly house/tent is destroyed), it says that we have a building from God, not of this creation, and not temporary.
- ❧ What “building” is that talking about? If it is our glorified body, it seems that it is saying we get that immediately upon our death, whereas in 1 Thess. 4, we get our glorified body at the rapture. Which is it?

The Answer



- ❧ The way to untangle this is as follows:
- ❧ 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of a particular (future) point in time: the Rapture. 2 Corinthians 5:1 refers to the present era, sometime before the Rapture.
- ❧ 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of those who died before the Rapture and those who are alive when it occurs. 2 Corinthians 5:1 refers to people who die before the rapture.

The Answer



- ❧ 1 Thessalonians speaks about the events that happen instantly at the rapture: dead raised and get new body, and living get new body.
- ❧ 2 Corinthians *does not speak of the particular timing of receiving the heavenly building from God.* If you read the text and think “we have our new body immediately when we die,” you are reading more into the text than is there.

The Answer



- ❧ All 2 Corinthians 5:1 says is that we **have** a sure expectation of a future body. It is as good as presently possessed, just delayed in enjoyment. We look forward to it, but we are not told in this verse when we get it. All we are told is that we can be sure we will get it.
- ❧ We can unpack the remainder of the verses like this.
- ❧ Verse 2: We desire to be clothed with our heavenly body. Our present existence is groan-worthy.
- ❧ Verse 3: If we are clothed with that body, we will not be “naked.” This refers to the state of being body-less.

The Answer



- ❧ Verse 4: The groaning of verse 2 is not that we want to die, but that we do not cherish the thought of being “unclothed” by losing our present body. That is an unpleasant thought. So, we instead want to transition immediately into our heavenly body. This is what it means that “mortality is swallowed up by life.”
- ❧ Verse 6: While we are in our present earthly bodies, we are away from the Lord.

The Answer



- ☞ Verse 8: We prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- ☞ But **notice this fact:** Paul does not say that when we leave our bodies at death we *immediately* get our final heavenly body. He seems to indicate we are in some sort of intermediate state which he calls “naked” or “unclothed.” This intermediate state is the subject of some debate. Do we have a temporary tent until our resurrection occurs? Or do we remain in a “spirit” state until then? I don’t think that’s a big deal...

The Answer



- ❧ To the point: there is a time delay between death today and the Rapture in the future.
- ❧ If you assume that you get your final new body immediately when you die – by reading more into 2 Cor. 5:1 than is there – then you will detect a conundrum as to what body you get at the Rapture.
- ❧ But if you assume that the time delay is just a pause before your final body is ready to be occupied, you will not detect any potential contradiction.

The Answer: MacDonald



“It might sound from this verse as if a believer receives this building from God the moment he dies, but that is not the case. He does not get his glorified body until Christ comes back for His church (1 Thess. 4:13-18). What happens to the believer is this. At the time of death, his spirit and soul go to be with Christ where he is consciously enjoying the glories of heaven. His body is placed in the grave. At the me of the Lord’s return, the dust will be raised from the grave, God will fashion it into a new, glorified body, and it will then be reunited with the spirit and the soul. Between death and Christ’s coming for His saints, the believer might be said to be in a disembodied condition. However, this does not mean that he is not fully conscious of all the joy and bliss of heaven. He is!”

The Answer



- ✧ This body that we will receive is the “spiritual body” of 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.
- ✧ Note too the contrast between *tent* and *building* in 2 Cor. 5:1.

The COVID Pandemic in Review



Some of you are new to the church since the beginning of the pandemic or right around that time, so I thought that some review would be good.

April 11, 2021 Message



- ❧ I gave a lengthy message about the COVID vaccine and how Christians should think through the whole situation. I reviewed that message last week and found only little of it that had aged poorly.
- ❧ There is additional data now which I did not have then. I could use it to update the notes.
- ❧ I am much more concerned about side effects of the vaccine than I was a year ago.

April 2021 Vaccine Msg



- ❧ The reason that the message aged well is that much of the message was based on timeless Biblical principles. These principles are always true no matter the world circumstances (perhaps, even, *especially* in difficult times!).

Lessons Learned



- ❧ What did we learn or reinforce during the past two years?
- ❧ Thankfully, as I recall, in Michigan we did not have to break any law to continue to gather for worship, and to do so without wearing masks. No so in other states. But we did learn a little bit about what it feels like to have to push back against the system “civil disobedience style” in order to obey God.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ In general, we learned that the governing authorities do not care to protect religious liberty, nor do many in the populace.
- ❧ Church is essential.
- ❧ After getting our bearings in the initial couple of months, we found it was completely feasible to meet together again with very little danger.

Steps Taken



- ❧ Prudent distancing
- ❧ Reinforced health policy for church attendance
- ❧ Maximize air flow, at some cost to comfort
- ❧ Add ultraviolet light disinfection to the air flow in both auditorium and fellowship hall
- ❧ Thoroughly clean air handler for auditorium.
- ❧ Resulted in zero or nearly zero case transmission in the church.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ I am pleased that we could meet for nearly two years and not halt our lives entirely. Had we stopped like some were saying initially, we would have lost two years of edification; two years of being together; two years of worship; two years of obeying God. That is a significant chunk of our lives.
- ❧ I realized early on that it is *wrong* for churches to prohibit willing people to gather for worship. I never really thought about that before.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ We had to practice love and forbearance with one another as some delayed in returning, others wore masks and others did not. This was excellent practice for us to receive one another, not to disputation about doubtful matters (Romans 14:1).
- ❧ We had to practice applying the doctrine of Christian liberty, choosing in such a way that we were fully convinced in our own minds.
- ❧ We were forced to discern what was good and bad in the media we were being pummeled with.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ I perceive that many of us were, and some still are, too fearful. If a worse trial comes along, some of us are in danger of folding up. Are you content with disobedience to the Lord? *That* kind of contentment is displeasing to God.
- ❧ We must know the gospel truly to overcome the fear of death. If we are gripped by the fear of death, we must consider whether we truly know the gospel.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ I said on April 26, 2020 these words: “The reality is that SARS-Cov-2 is here to stay. We have to deal with it, and we can’t do so by quarantining for the rest of our lives.” I said this at a time when people were hoping that we would be able to rid ourselves of the virus completely. That was then, and still is today, a pipe dream.
- ❧ We have learned how to be a more careful about spreading germs and living with disease.

Lessons Learned



- ❧ Societally, the cost of isolation has been high, and its effects will only become more fully known in the future.
 - ❧ Reading scores are down for young children.
 - ❧ Social development for young people has been stifled.
 - ❧ Tech and media have grown more influential in our lives.
 - ❧ The economy has taken a big hit.
 - ❧ What else?

Sobering Statistics



- ❧ In Michigan, 35,096 deaths are attributed to COVID-19 on 2.36 million cases (out of 10 million population). If you have escaped COVID so far, do not expect to do so forever.
- ❧ That is a death rate of 1.487%, much less than initially feared. U.S. average is 1.2%.
- ❧ The number of cases is probably quite a bit higher than known since some people did not get tested. This means the death rate is lower, and I think a significant amount lower, than 1.487%.
- ❧ 965,000 deaths occurred in the United States in the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sobering Statistics

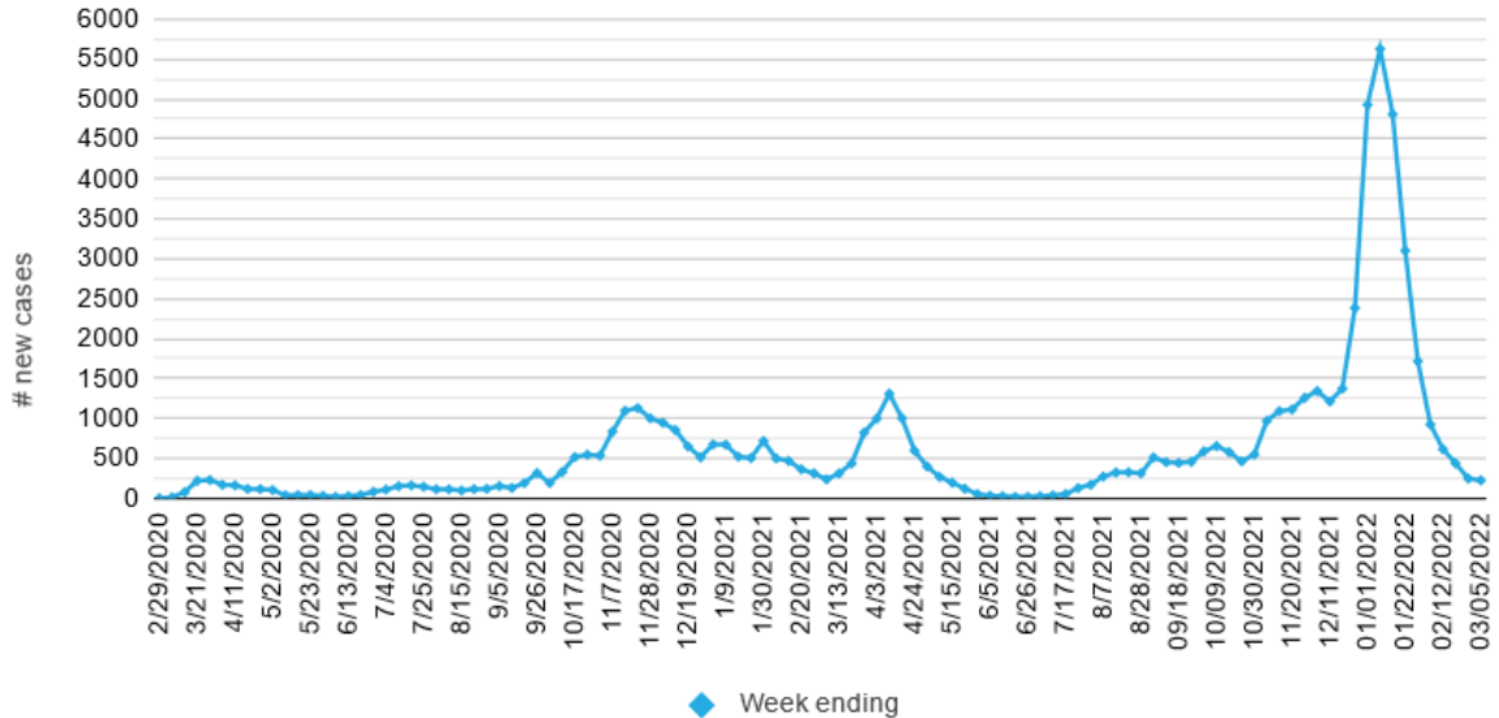


- ❧ There have been nearly 80 million cases in the U.S.A.
- ❧ Over 6 million deaths worldwide. The Spanish flu of 1918-1919 is estimated to have taken 50 million lives.
- ❧ For a sense of scale, there are 73 million abortions per year (<https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide>). That means nearly 150 million abortions in the same two-year period that 6 million perished due to COVID-19. It is obvious what needs more of our attention.

Thankful for Relief

New Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Washtenaw County Residents (by Symptom Onset Week)* (as of 3/10), updated weekly

Washtenaw County (total N =63892)



Other Questions



Book of Life

<https://www.fbcaa.org/MattPostiffBlog/2019/05/The-Book-of-Life> which I answered on May 9, 2021 in a sermon.