

1-30-10

Letter To An Atheist – Part 2

Thank you for your follow up letter. Let me summarize our two positions.

I see the visible evidence of creation and discern that there must have been a Creator. As the marvel of a watch would indicate that there must have been a watchmaker ... that the watch could not have suddenly and accidentally appeared on its own ... so also the marvels of the universe would indicate that there must have been a Creator. Further, as I examine the Bible ... its accurate portrayal of mankind and the ultimate perfection that will be brought about by God at some future point, I discern that it is not an ordinary book and that it must be what it claims to be ... a revelation to mankind from God.

You see the visible evidence of creation, yet you are not logically led from this to determine that there must have been a Creator. You do not seem to address at all the wonders of creation; but only the woes of mankind ... as you determine that there cannot be a God. And you use certain passages from the Bible to show that it cannot possibly be from the hand of God.

I continue to contend that the watch tells us very clearly that there must have been a watchmaker ... a Creator. Now as we look at this world, and as we look at the Bible, if certain things **seem** to be contrary to what God might do ... perhaps our preconceived notions about God are in error. Perhaps you are choosing to create God in your image, and if He doesn't act as you would act in any given circumstance, you doubt His existence.

Now I would acknowledge that if God's plans for the future are as most preachers and teachers within organized religion tell us, we might doubt that God really is patient, wise and loving. If we were to contend that once this short life has ended, those who did not believe will find themselves tortured forever and ever in a burning torment ... it would be difficult to show that this God was truly loving and wise. For if He is truly the Creator, and if He is wise, and if He is loving ... then can He not lead every last one of mankind, even the most rebellious, to the point where He is restored, reformed and reconciled to God? I tell you that if any is willing to study the Bible and think for Himself, outside of the distorted teachings of the organized church which has been in error even since the days of the apostles, we will see that God is truly in the process of bringing about this total restoration ... this perfection.

So I look at the wonders of creation and determine that there must have been a Creator responsible for all of this. And I find within the Bible that God is in the process of bringing about perfection, out of the midst of the heartbreak and chaos that we see all around us ... and I discern that the Bible truly is a revelation from God, and He really is wise and loving ... and also patient.

Yes ... He is patient with mankind. We look at so much evil in the world and ask how He can allow this to continue. But He looks upon us with patience ... sorrowing at times as we sorrow ... but leading us gradually out of this quagmire of chaos to the place of perfection He has planned for us. I do not understand why He does not take us to that place more quickly, or with less pain and suffering than we feel at times. I do not always understand His ways in the short term; but from the Bible I do understand His plans for the long term.

Now many of the arguments presented in your letter have to do with life's experiences. As for the poor ... are they not poor because of man's selfishness? If we voluntarily redistributed resources, held on to less for ourselves, gave more of our own time and resources, could we not largely solve the problems of poverty? This is man's shortcoming; not God's. We ask how God could **allow** these things to happen ... but do we truly want or expect Him to take away our will entirely and implement His own will by force? Would we be happy with that? Are not our experiences, and the opportunities to do good for our fellow man, a part of our learning and reformation process?

We look at earthquakes and can once again see man's shortcomings. We know enough about this earth to predict where earthquakes will occur ... or hurricanes ... or floods. If we were concerned with our fellow man, even those in impoverished nations, would we not assist in educating them ... helping them know where to build and where not to build ... and how to build structures to withstand the forces of nature in their areas?

Yes in the short term ... generally less than 100 years (not long in the scheme of things) ... there is pain ... as with the pain of childbirth as you reference in your letter. But most women will tell you the pain of childbirth is well worth the finished result. And as for Pharaoh, and the many other atrocities portrayed in the Bible ... are they not repeatedly illustrations of the shortcomings of man fighting against man? Do we blame all of this on God?

And in the case of Abraham, as He was asked to sacrifice Isaac ... God did not ultimately have Isaac sacrificed. This was a lesson in faith. Surrounding nations, because of their wickedness, did sacrifice children to their gods. But God was showing Abraham that this was not the case with Him. Abraham showed His willingness if that is what God demanded ... but God did not demand the sacrifice of a human, and taught His people this in the process.

I do not know the reason God found it necessary to ask that a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath be stoned ... or why Nadab and Abihu were required to pay such a high price for offering a sacrifice in a way outside of God's instructed way (although God was quite specific that His instructions to Israel were to be kept to the last detail due to their importance; and He did forewarn of the penalties beforehand).

The bottom line is that I cannot explain God's precise reasoning for doing or commanding all of the specifics that we find in the Bible ... and I cannot explain why He acts, or fails to act, in certain specific ways in our present-day experiences; but ...

- The wonders of creation show me that there must be a Creator,
- The atrocities of the world show me the selfishness and pride of man,
- The Bible's perfect conclusion show me that God is wise and loving, and is leading us to the point where all things are restored, reformed and reconciled to Him,
- With the long term conclusion assured, I can face what I must face in the short term.

Thanks again for sharing your thoughts and for allowing me to share mine.

[If you wish to comment, please write me at bob@GraceEvangel.org I will try to address all reasonable questions and comments in a subsequent blog. And please visit us at www.GraceEvangel.org]
