



## Chapter Three

# Answering Your Questions

This upcoming section Bill, is devoted to answering some of the questions raised in your film. I was as dissatisfied as you were with almost every response offered by your interviewees. Their answers simply didn't make any sense.

And again, I'm absolutely not trying to persuade you to concur with my answers to your questions. I'm simply demonstrating to you that there are thinking Christian people who have found spiritual answers which offer a good degree of intellectual satisfaction.

### **BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

We couldn't possibly begin here without first noting the obvious – that not all Christians believe the same things. I loved it in the movie when one of your interviewees made a claim that something was in the Bible. You corrected him saying “That's not what the Bible says” to which he replied “That's what the Bible means to say.” You obviously got a kick out of that.

But in fact, that man was speaking truth. He was referring to Biblical interpretation. A lot of what the Bible actually says can be interpreted differently by different people. To sum it up in one word – denominations. When there are spiritual points of contention which Christians simply can't agree on, rather than agree to disagree, believers will many times split from their current source of fellowship, and resort to finding others of similar faith, often starting a new Christian denomination in the process. And when I say “many times”, I'll note here that Christianity Today Magazine carried an article recently, indicating that at the time of that issue's publication, there was something in the neighborhood of 38,000 different Christian denominations, each one of course believing that they have the real “truth”, unlike all those other guys.

I have two comments about all this – one secular and one spiritual.

First, the secular. These divisions among Christians shouldn't come as a surprise to you or to anyone else. Regardless of the discipline, you'll always find people with differing ideas on what's right and what's wrong.

Take marketing for instance. Advertising agencies spend countless hours and countless dollars, trying to position their product within the marketplace with an eye toward generating maximum sales. I think of a new, small company, for instance, trying to make its mark in the world. Imagine the brainstorming sessions once the decision has been

made to purchase an exorbitantly expensive Super Bowl TV slot. Which advertising approach would be the best? Should the commercial be one which tugs at the heart strings or one which aims for the funny bone? Or maybe one that simply highlights the satisfaction one derives from using the product. Everyone in the room, each with many past successes under their belt, will have differing ideas.

And ... different embodiments for each idea. If humor is the final choice, each one will have different ideas about what is funny. Invariably, one will be overruled by another. Someone is going to go home and complain to his wife that, once again, his idea was trampled on by some clown who doesn't know what he's talking about. All the participants are trained professionals. Each has proven his or herself in the past. That's why they were invited into the room in the first place. Still, differences among these creative groups will oftentimes outnumber points of agreement.

And that goes for any discipline. Whether qualified or not, people are always second-guessing the decisions made by the coaches or the manager.

So too when it comes to statements made in the Bible. Ten people could have just as many different understandings as to what claim is being made in any particular verse. That's O.K. As long as the interpretations are fair, consistent with Scriptural teaching throughout, taken in context, and true to the original meaning of the words used by the author. Let me say it this way – if someone expresses a spiritual belief, it must be something which can be backed up with Scripture, even if their interpretation of that Scripture, taken within context, is different than the belief of another Christian. But, if their spiritual interpretation is contrary to the teachings found in the Word, prefaced with something along the lines of “well, it just seems right” then, citing a litany of anecdotal “evidences”, that's entirely unacceptable.

You saw a lot of this along your travels. You asked a gentleman if he believed in miracles. Of course he did. But rather than to point out the numerous indisputable miracles of the Bible, he went on to tell you about just one of the countless miracles he had witnessed (it started raining when he stuck his arm out the window). Quite frankly, I often stick my arm out the window to see if it's raining. I think that both you and I share the advisable opinion that a rainy day is not exactly a miracle. Like you say “Rain frogs ... a miracle ... rain raindrops ... not a miracle.” That's why I've spent so much time here denouncing confidence in extra-biblical sources when formulating spiritual beliefs.

Which brings me now to my spiritual commentary.

Understand that I'm not going to be dogmatic about any belief I'll present here, because, as I've already said, there will be other Christians with different, equally valid beliefs. I'm only presenting different spiritual positions to demonstrate that there are logical, intellectually satisfying spiritual answers to even the toughest questions.

If I were to have interviewed the same people you did, I too would have walked away with the solid conclusion that there simply is no logic to be had, moving into the spiritual realm. I'm hoping to dispel that conclusion.

With that understood, let's begin answering some of your specific questions from the movie. We'll start with a big one, but then again, aren't they all?

## **THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

One of your most interesting observations (at least to me) was in your comment made concerning the virgin birth. You seemed bewildered as to how such an astonishing detail as a "virgin birth" could be left out of one's biography.

Here's what you said – "You'd think that if you were one of Christ's biographers, that would be sort of an important thing not to leave out. 'Oh ... He was born of a virgin.' They don't notice the virgin birth. I'd think that is something that, if you're any sort of reporter, you'd put into the story."

You later point out that only two of the four gospel accounts mention this most singularly stupefying 'fact'. "What editor looks at the facts and goes 'ah ... yeah, but take out the thing about the virgin birth. That's not interesting'." For me, Bill, a laugh out loud moment!

O.K. So let's make some sense of this, because left unanswered, this is a question which really could potentially plant seeds of doubt as to the veracity of these gospel accounts.

Understand first Bill, that these four books which open the New Testament, are always referred to as the "gospels". The word "gospel" means "good news". So the purpose of each of these four writers, first and foremost, was to declare the good news that Jesus came to this earth to give His life as a ransom for us, that we might be reconciled back to God through His sacrifice at Calvary. These gospels were not at all to be understood as biographies of Jesus. In fact, other than in your film, I don't know if I've ever heard anyone refer to these first four New Testament books as "the biographies of Jesus". That's not why they were written.

Now, I absolutely do agree Bill, that it would be an egregious error and highly suspect if even one of these gospel writers were to make any reference to the birth of Christ, and fail to mention the virgin birth phenomenon. But this was simply not the case.

Two of these authors (Matthew and Luke) open their gospel accounts at the time when Jesus was in His infancy. And in both instances, each surely mentions the virgin birth of Christ (see Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:34).

The other two gospel writers (Mark and John) begin their stories as Jesus is entering into public ministry at about the age of thirty. Thus, they would find no need to reference the

peculiar circumstances surrounding His birth decades earlier. These two gospels concentrate solely on Jesus' ministerial outreach as an adult.

## **THE TRINITY**

You raised the subject of the Trinity, saying that if Christianity recognizes only one God, how can there be a God the Father, as well as Jesus who is also recognized as God, and the Holy Spirit who is God as well? That sounds like three Gods. What gives here?

And no sooner did you ask the question Bill, then out came the off-the-shelf Christian answer – water can also be steam and can also be ice. To me, that response is not at all intellectually satisfying, as it clearly wasn't to you either.

So ... try this on for size. As humans, we are finite beings. We all had a beginning (just ask your mother) and we'll all have an end (just ask your great-grandfather). God, as revealed in the Scriptures is an infinite Being, having no beginning and no end. So by His very nature, He is much different than we are, which makes Him harder for us to understand.

Now we can come to understand a little bit about the infinite by looking at our number system. There is no lowest number, no highest number. Numbers stretch indefinitely in both directions. Because numbers are infinite, our finite minds cannot fully comprehend certain things about them. Let me illustrate.

Mathematicians will tell you that there are an infinite number of fractions between the numbers 1 and 2. Now, you would think that there would be even more fractions between the numbers 1 and 3. I'll name  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  as just a couple of examples of fractions that don't exist between the numbers 1 and 2. Yet, because you can't have more than an infinite amount of anything, there are indeed, no greater number of fractions between 1 and 3 than there are between the numbers 1 and 2. Ask any mathematics professor. Strange but true.

Well, how can that be? It really doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but it is an accepted mathematical fact. And here's what we learn – some things about the eternal and the infinite are simply incomprehensible to the finite mind.

So to the question; how can God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit all be revealed as the one true God? Because God is an infinite Being, we will have to be satisfied with our understanding that some things about the eternal and the infinite are simply incomprehensible to the finite mind.

Now, although there appears to be no fully satisfactory answer as to why there is no greater number of fractions between the numbers 1 and 3 than there are between the numbers 1 and 2, still, I'm not going to refuse to use numbers any more until I find a solution to this problem. I've simply decided that, while some things about numbers

presently remain a mystery to me, I'll continue to make good use of what I do understand about them.

So too, there are a lot of things about God that I don't understand because of His eternal nature. Still, I'll make good use of the things I do understand about Him (His love, His mercy, His graciousness in saving us), satisfied that one day, I'll see Him in person, at which point I'm sure He'll explain all of the "infinite" things about Himself which are, for now, quite mysterious.

## **THE AGE OF THE EARTH**

Along your travels, you encountered believers who, in your expressed opinion, were otherwise intelligent people (I'm speaking of your visit to the Creation Museum) until they began insisting that our planet is only about six-thousand years old. Six thousand years is a long way from the almost universally accepted scientific viewpoint, which places the age of the earth more in the neighborhood of four and a half billion years old.

Now these people at the Creation Museum really do believe the age of the earth to be six thousand or so years old. But Bill, I want to make a point here, and I expect to be hammering this point home throughout this text: you don't have to believe everything Christian people tell you they believe, in order to be a genuine Christian. You don't have to believe in a young earth to be a good Christian. In fact, there are many, many Christians who think that the idea of a six-thousand year old earth is preposterous!

So yes, you really can believe in a very, very old earth, and still be a genuine Christian believer. Which begs the question: how can that be? How can Christians who believe the earth is billions of years old, ignore the book of Genesis, which tells them that God performed all of His creative work in six days, (man being one of those He made in that small time-frame), and one can clearly count the generations from that first man to the time of Jesus, who, according to the Bible, walked the earth about 2,000 years ago?

Doesn't it fly in the face of Biblical teaching, to believe the scientific evidence, rather than the plain "Word of God"? Doesn't that demonstrate a total lack of one of Christianity's most precious commodities – faith?

Not at all. In fact, I have no quarrel with those who believe either way. Believe it or not Bill, as a thinking Christian man, I have personally found intellectually satisfying arguments for both positions; arguments which can both be reconciled scientifically and yet sit quite comfortably with the Bible narrative as well. Let me offer to you both of these positions along with their credentials.

And understand Bill – again, I'm not saying this is how it happened. I'm simply demonstrating that scenarios can be found which are both true to the Biblical account and at the same time intellectually accommodating. Individuals are free to choose whichever option they prefer, or to find another option altogether. Still others may decide not to

choose any option at all, being satisfied with simply knowing that there are reasonable and logical options available.

## **A VERY YOUNG EARTH**

As in the case of the representatives from the Creation Museum, there are indeed Christian people who propose that the true scientific evidence points to a literal six-thousand-year-old earth. Their arguments show how the Geologic Column pictured in school textbooks doesn't line up at all with the geologic strata in the ground. They also explain away the need for millions of years to create fossils (there are actually fossilized cowboy boots and teddy bears).

Their thinking suggests that the primary reason the scientific community rallies around the idea of a multi-billion-year-old earth, is because this is the only proposition which would make the theory of evolution even remotely possible. And evolution is their best argument against the creation narrative. I personally don't see it this way, as this is all way too cynical and unconscionably conspiratorial for me. If I were to genuinely embrace this way of thinking, I would then have to be skeptical of all scientific offerings. Why would I want to take medicine when I'm sick, or even use modern technological devices, if I believe they're all designed by an industry actively engaged in a gigantic conspiracy to deceive me? Although I have to respect someone who embraces this belief to the extent that they are staying true to the Scriptural account, still, there are much better arguments to be made for a very young earth.

Here's one young earth scenario which harmonizes generally accepted scientific observation with Biblical claims. Adam, in the Bible story, was made from the dust of the earth. Now, if you read the account, you'll notice that Adam wasn't made as a baby, but rather as a mature man. He likely had chest hair his first day on earth. Now, if we were to see someone standing six feet tall with hair on their chest, we would rightfully assume that that person was more than just a few days old. But in Adam's case we would be wrong (at least according to the Biblical account, which we'll always use as our spiritual umpire).

So too goes the argument for a very young earth. The thinking is this: our planet, just like Adam, could have been created as a mature structure. In other words, it didn't necessarily go through all of the stages that it appears to have gone through, but rather, was simply created to look like it had. All of earth's geological features which appear to have been formed over billions of years, through earthquakes, extremes in temperature, etc., were put there by God when He created a "mature" earth over the course of just one 24-hour day.

We, as mere mortals, understand and in fact, practice this same thing. I've purchased blue jeans with holes in the knees, t-shirts with faded and cracked lettering, newly made and right there on the store shelves. They were made to look old.

This approach does offer an explanation for the appearance of a very old earth, while still remaining absolutely true to the Bible narrative. After all, who's to say that God can't create a mature looking earth, when the Biblical account shows that He had no trouble at all creating a mature looking one-day-old man?

Of course it would take unimaginable intelligence to conceive in one's mind a planet; then to visualize what that planet would look like billions of years after it would writhe through all of its stages of development (given the geological parameters of our earth), but there's really nothing in the Bible that would limit God from doing so. And that's really all I'm trying to do here – show how an intelligent person can harmonize the Biblical account with scientific observation. I prefer this explanation over any of the others I've heard to support belief in a young earth, as no argument can be made against it whether from a Biblical or a scientific point of view. And maybe most importantly to me, I like it because it speaks of the amazingly mind-boggling glory of God.

## **A VERY OLD EARTH**

Now, let me propose an explanation for the idea of a very old earth, which, at the same time, remains true to the Scriptures as well.

The Bible teaches us that God began and finished His creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them, in the course of six days, resting on the seventh day. However, the word “day” in the original Hebrew language, in addition to meaning a 24-hour period, can just as faithfully be interpreted to be an indeterminate period of time. (And by the way Bill, when I refer to the original meanings of Biblical words, understand that I am not a Hebrew or Greek scholar. The nice thing is that I don't have to be.

Many Christians keep in their library a book entitled “Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible”. It's really very cleverly put together to help one determine how the Biblical writers intended for each word in the Bible to be understood. Also, it's nearly universally accepted by all Christian faiths.

Here's how it works. You look up any Bible word alphabetically, just like you would in a common dictionary. When you find the word, you'll see a listing of every verse in which that word appears in the Bible.

Now, we all know that words, depending on their context, can have many different meanings. We see this even in our contemporary English language. We might say that the stove is hot, or we might say that that girl is hot. The same word has a very different meaning, depending on its context.

Let's use John 3:16 as our example. The verse begins this way “God so loved the world...” Now, to determine exactly what is meant by the word “world”, you would first find the word “world” alphabetically in the concordance. Next to the word, you'd see a number (in this case 2889). You'd then turn to the back part of the concordance, where you'd look numerically for 2889. After the number, you'd find the meaning of the word

“world”; that is, how that word would have been understood by its original audience, or more specifically, how the Biblical writer intended that word to be understood in that particular context.

Getting back to our example, when the Bible says that God created certain things on the first day, on the second day, etc., looking up that word “day” in the Strong’s Concordance, you’ll see that it can be understood both literally and figuratively. It carries the literal meaning “from sunrise to sunset or from one sunset to the next.” It can also be interpreted figuratively as “a space of time defined by an associated term”. In other words, the word can be understood from the context in which it’s used.

So what is the context? To the believer, the Bible, although composed of sixty-six individual books, is seen as one literary work. So the context of any word, verse, or concept in the Bible is to be understood in the context of the rest of the entire Bible.

So let’s investigate. This definition of the word “day” in the creation account is curiously similar to the Strong Concordance’s definition of the word “day” as used in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:8 which says this – “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”. In this verse the figurative definition reads this way – “a period, always defined more or less clearly by the context”.

From this verse, we learn an interesting aspect of how God sees things. The phrase “... one day is with the Lord as a thousand years”, must be understood figuratively, as taken literally, the rest of the verse (“... and a thousand years as one day”) would simply make no sense. You can’t have it both ways. What we learn here then, is simply this – with God there is no recognition of time. Whether you say a day or a thousand years, it’s all the same to Him. Now, because God never changes, this aspect of how He sees things was just as true when the creation story was written as it was when Peter wrote his second epistle. So, interpreting our Genesis verse figuratively, it would read – “God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in them, in six ‘spaces’ or ‘periods’ of time”. And in this case, we can’t really be sure at all how long each of these “days” was. Each of these six “days” could have been a half-billion years. There’s a three-billion year old earth right there. Science says maybe 4.5 billion. O.K. So make each “day” a little longer. In doing so, we remain true to the observable science and equally true to the Biblical text as well.

Now, how would we know whether this Genesis verse was intended by its author to be interpreted literally or figuratively? Well, if we interpret the word “day” in the creation story to mean “from one sunset to the next”, then all of the creative work of God would have to have been accomplished in six literal days, meaning that the earth is literally about six thousand years old (counting the generations from Adam who was created on the sixth day). But why should we look at the realities around us, and be forced to stretch our imagination to such an unreasonable degree, when we have the clear option of interpreting the verse figuratively?

And again, I'm not saying that any of these scenarios is how it all actually happened. I'm simply hopeful that there's enough here to demonstrate to you, that thinking Christians can embrace positions different from yours, while remaining true to both generally accepted scientific observation and the Biblical creation account.

Now, let me move on to address other questions and comments from your film. I'll tackle these issues in no particular order,

## **SANTA CLAUS AND GOD**

This one I thought was particularly funny. Speaking of Kris Kringle, you said – “If Santa Claus can hit every home in the world”, (at which point, the existence of Santa was quickly disputed by your interviewee, as if you were actually serious) –

“I don't believe in Santa Claus”, he said.

“Of course not”, you continued. “That's ridiculous. A man flying all around the world and dropping presents down the chimney, that's ridiculous. But one man hearing everybody murmuring to Him at the same time, that I get.” You laughed. And so did I.

Well, you missed just one little detail, Bill, and here is one of those cases where you understand the Bible to say something it doesn't say at all. The book of Numbers, chapter 23, verse 19 tells us plainly that God is not a man! So it's not simply a “man” hearing everybody murmuring to Him at the same time. It's the omniscient and omnipotent Supreme Being who (given the parameters of His nature as described in the Scriptures), can quite easily hear and answer all those prayers. Mark 10:27 says this – “With man it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.”

I'm suspicious Bill, that one of the chief reasons you have so much trouble believing a lot of what the Bible claims to be true, is that to you, God is just a guy like us. If so, you've really got to expand your horizons, friend. Our God is way bigger and better than everything He's made. We simply look at the moon; He made the moon! And He made it out of nothing, mind you. Those are the terms we as believers, think in. And when you start thinking like that, a lot of the mystery is taken out of any question you might have about how God could do this or do that.

For so many their concept of God is very small. And I suspect that the reason for this is due at least in part, to the way God's own people often represent Him. They toss His Name around so casually, giving others the mistaken impression that He's just “one of the guys”. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here's a sterling example from your movie of just what I'm referring to.

## **YOUR FILM'S MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT**

Your movie shows a woman (I certainly can't call her a lady), who, as a supposed representative of the Christian gospel, stands on the platform before God's people,

lecturing them on how they each need “a Holy Ghost enema right up your rear end.” (Bill, I could hardly bring myself to even type those words). Let me say this – she should be ashamed of herself. I’m ashamed for her ... mouthing such unfathomable disrespect and irreverence for the Holy Spirit, who’s very Name declares His holiness.

I hope that as soon as those words left her mouth, every true believer in that crowd, jumped to their feet and headed for the exits, each one exhibiting their disdain for such an insulting comment, not just to the Holy Spirit, but to the Church at large. Shame on her.

And I hope too, that she went home crying out in brokenness and repentance before God for this ridiculous characterization, which only serves to cheapen God and to cheapen His work.

### **THE “GAY GENE”**

I found this to be a particularly interesting segment. You interviewed a man who, although he now claims to have a new heterosexual orientation, grew up with homosexual leanings. Because a lot of ground was covered in the interview, I’ll have a lot to say here.

First, if anyone were to simply search the internet, googling “Is there scientific evidence for a gay gene?” they’d find (at least at the time of this writing) that there is simply no consensus at all in the scientific community on this matter. If anything, the evidence and consequently the prevailing scientific opinion is that there is not. In your film, you clearly gave the opposite impression.

Also, I’d like to address your statement that Jesus never spoke about homosexuality. Here’s your quote – “All of the prescriptions against homosexuality come from the Old Testament. Jesus never said a word about homosexuality. If it’s so important, why didn’t He ever bring it up?”

Your interviewee in the film replied “Well there are a lot of little things that Jesus never mentioned” to which you countered “But this is a big thing.” And you’re right, Bill. It’s huge.

So here’s the question – if homosexuality is such a big thing, something so important, why didn’t Jesus ever bring it up?

Let me offer to you here, two very intellectually satisfying answers. And understand that these answers are mutually exclusive. In other words, if you were to choose to believe the first one, you obviously wouldn’t believe the second, and vice-versa.

Answer #1 – Jesus never spoke about rape or arson either. So clearly then, Jesus didn’t speak about everything that’s important, even some very big things (including homosexuality).

That's one answer. Here's Answer #2 – and let me repeat your question here again just for continuity. “Jesus never said a word about homosexuality. If it's so important, why didn't He ever bring it up?”

One needs to remember that the entire Bible presents itself as “inspired by God” to communicate His feelings to us (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16). Because God is Spirit, He used the hands of men to “pen” if you will, the words onto paper (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:21). Still, it is understood by every true believer, that God Himself is the true author of every word in the Bible. Therefore, because Jesus is God (and we'll look at that in depth later), He did incontestably speak to the subject of homosexuality through the Apostle Paul, particularly in the New Testament book of Romans, Chapter One, where you'll find what would probably be one of homosexuality's most scathing Biblical rebukes.

Bottom line on homosexuality as far as the mainstream Christian community is concerned – the Bible teaches us that God never changes (Hebrews 13:8). On that basis, you might remember that He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the prevalent homosexual sin there. The book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, 2:6 tells us (from the New American Standard Version) that “He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter.” (In other words, anyone who would follow in the footsteps of these evil nations.) So God clearly feels no differently toward this sin today than He did back then.

Now, having seen how our God has dealt with nations who have allowed the homosexual agenda to flourish, and with this clear warning from Peter the Apostle, we would be wise to understand that practicing these same behaviors might very well invite God's anger and wrath upon our nation as well.

Now, make no mistake! While this warning from Scripture is certainly not a bad reason for individuals and nations to change their ways, the Christian Church at large absolutely does not condone the ill-considered judgment and repugnant behavior of certain confused believers, picketing the funerals of homosexual soldiers who have so heroically given their lives in service to their country. The actions of this misguided sect are born, not out of love and compassion, but out of hatred, in direct opposition to the calling of Christ. Although we can't support or encourage the homosexual lifestyle, true Christian believers understand that the rights of each individual to find their own identity and to choose their own destiny must be honored and respected. God made no mistake when He gave to each of us the right to make free will choices.

And incidentally, the Lord One might wonder why Christians feel so threatened by homosexuality. I'll tell you straight out (no pun intended) and it's not homophobia. It's simply that we've seen how our God has dealt with nations in the past who have allowed the homosexual agenda to flourish, and we're fearful that His judgment and wrath might be visited upon our nation as well. We're really just trying to hold back the tide, so to speak. With the name “sodomy” given to one of homosexual's primary acts, no one can plead ignorance here. We believe that when we encourage any part of the homosexual

agenda in our society through our voting, or our silence on the issue, there is no separating our nation from those wicked nations of the past. We need to be careful not to invite upon our country, the same wrath of God shown toward those people of old.

And incidentally, the Lord promises to provide the strength to overcome temptations, not only of homosexuality, but temptations of any kind (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13). So whether or not one is “born that way” or there really is a “gay gene” is simply academic.

Besides, even if it would one day be proven that some individuals are “born” homosexual, that wouldn't provide them with a license to practice homosexuality, any more than someone should be permitted to steal, simply because, from as far back as they can remember, they've had constant urges to take things which don't belong to them. Again, as Christians, God will empower us with His Holy Spirit to overcome the natural urges within us to do wrong. His Scripture says in Philippians 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

And then finally on this subject, allow me to soapbox here for just a minute. I was watching a talk show recently, featuring a Christian man debating a homosexual activist. This activist mentioned that he regularly marches in gay pride parades across the nation.

The Christian man pointed out that homosexual behavior is condemned in the Bible as a sin, requiring repentance. In response, the homosexual man said “Yeah, and the Bible also says ‘Judge not’ and here you are judging me.” As you might expect, many people in the audience started laughing and applauding, as if to say “Yeah, he's right. You've got no business making a judgment on him.”

Let me be clear. If I were to see two men walking arm and arm down the street together, talking and laughing, I would certainly be making an unfair judgment on them to say “Those guys need to repent of homosexual sin.” I simply can't know that. They might be two brothers who haven't seen each other in ten years, and are just catching up on old times. That kind of judgment is most certainly strictly forbidden in Jesus' command “Judge not”.

However, the man on this TV program outwardly admitted that he engages in and promotes homosexual behavior. As believers, we wouldn't be making a judgment on him by telling him his behavior is sinful. God, in His Word, has already made that judgment, and we're simply agreeing with the judgment God has already made.

This doesn't take anything away from what Jesus was saying. His point is well taken that, as Christians, we could keep ourselves plenty busy finding areas in our own lives that need improvement, without looking for shortcomings in everyone else. Still, we are required to be in agreement with God's clearly stated negative position concerning homosexual behavior.

## **JESUS' EARTHLY MISSION**

The bank robbery had suddenly gone horribly wrong. It was evident there would be no escape. In desperation, the robber grabbed a young girl from her father's arms and put his gun to her head.

"Anybody comes near me, I'll kill her!" he screams.

"No, no, no!" the father pleaded. "Don't hurt her. Please, take me instead. I'd be worth a lot more to you than she is. Just please, let her go and take me."

The robber pushed the child aside and grabbed her father by the throat. He shoved his gun into the side of the man's neck, and headed for the front door. "You're a dead man", the robber whispered into the father's ear as they stepped outside.

"Thank you for sparing my child", the man cried back through his tears.

The scream of sirens was deafening. The police yelled to the man to drop his weapon and surrender. Recognizing the hopelessness of his situation, and in anguished frustration, the robber pulled the trigger. The young girl's father fell dead to the ground.

After a three month investigation, the father's life insurance company refused to pay benefits to his wife, as suicide wasn't covered in the man's policy.

Even you Bill, would think that was ridiculous.

On a couple of occasions, you spoke of Jesus being on a "suicide mission." This is simply wrong. As you see in my little story, the father's actions were born out of love for his daughter. He wanted to save her, even if it would cost him his own life. His was not a suicide mission. It was a sacrificial offering of one life for another, because no lesser price would satisfy the demand.

Jesus loves the people He created (yes, even you Bill), understanding that no lesser price than the giving of His own life, could be paid to redeem us. His love compelled Him to give His life in exchange for ours.

## **JONAH AND THE WHALE**

You asked about Jonah and the whale. And what did you get? One of the off-the-shelf, stock Christian answers which really isn't an answer at all.

"You really believe that Jonah lived in the belly of a whale for three days?" you asked.

"It wasn't a whale", the interviewee shot back. "It was a big fish."

How silly. Whale ... big fish ... I agree with you Bill, who cares? The question is – did a guy really live for three days in the belly of a fish? And what distinguishes this story from any other "fairy tale" as you put it?

Bill, I hate to say it, but your raising this question was to me, a red herring (again, no pun intended). Here's why. The first verse of the Bible says this "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Now were talking about "creating", not just making something. The earth, the sky, the sun, the stars, all made out of nothing. You don't have to go any further than the Bible's first sentence to find this absolutely mind-boggling statement.

So how could you possibly pass that up, and jump 32 books later (if I counted right) to something so far less amazing? It just doesn't make sense to me that you would ask this question in the first place. Well, still it deserves an answer, so here it is. God created the universe, making it out of nothing. He certainly can figure out a way to have a man survive inside a giant fish for a few days. What more can I say? (And by the way, same answer for the "talking snake" you referred to a number of times in the movie).

### **AND YOUR PROBLEM WAS ...?**

I'm referring here to your visit to Trucker's Chapel in Raleigh, North Carolina. One of the church attendees detailed a little of his past history.

"I walked for thirty years as a Satanist priest. From the time I grew up, I was in Satanism ... being addicted to drugs, and running prostitutes and the women and everything that goes with that." You later commented to your driver "When the guy said 'Yeah, I used to do drugs, I used to have women', I'm thinking 'And your problem was ...?'"

Well here's what his problem was, according to the Bible.

It all goes back to when God placed the first two human beings Adam and Eve, in a garden of paradise. And what a wonderful place it was. Its location is presumed to have been somewhere in the Middle East. But a real earthly place, a heaven on earth if you will. A place of incomprehensible tranquility with God and man in perfect communion with each other. Everything was just the way it was supposed to be.

And God wanted to keep it that way. He didn't want to see any of that get ruined. He loves man. Of the multiple billions of created things, we're the only thing with the distinction of being made in His own image and in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26).

So what could ruin it? Well, if everything was just the way it was supposed to be, it could be ruined if anything of significance was changed. Then everything wouldn't be the way it was supposed to be. And it wouldn't be good anymore.

As we read on, the story unfolds. A serpent slithers through the garden, the devil, the deceiver. And he has one goal in mind. He wants to ruin everything. And he knows the way to ruin things. All he needed to do was to change something of significance in this paradise.

God had established only one rule for this first man and woman. He warned them not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree which grew there in the garden, telling them straight out, if they were to do so, they would be opening the door for this horrible thing called death to come into this paradise.

Still, we all know the story. The serpent went to the woman, and through a clever deception, promised her a divine nature of her own if she would eat of this forbidden fruit (as it has now come to be called). With this act, sin would enter into that paradise. And this would most certainly be a significant change to the way things were.

She chose to listen to the serpent, eating and then sharing the fruit with Adam. Suddenly, there was trouble in paradise. For the first time, man knew what it was like for things not to be the way they were supposed to be. Fearful and ashamed, they hid from God, this God who has so wonderfully provided everything for them, who has so faithfully loved them, and cared for them. I have no doubt they both wished they could just go back in time and have a “do-over”. But it was too late.

God pronounces their judgment. “Adam ... Eve ... things were great for you. Why would you want to change them? Well, O.K. Things will be different now. Adam, now you’re going to have to work for a living. And Eve, there’s going to be pain in childbirth. And both of you have brought death into this formerly wonderful paradise.”

And suddenly, everything which made their home such a wonderful place would change. Their foolish choice to bring sin into their paradise ushered in sickness, sorrow, pain and death.

Now, here’s the point that I want to make Bill; one you’ll really need to understand before we move on. Clearly, the origin of suffering is sin. When there was no sin in that place called paradise, there was no suffering. And heaven itself is today, a place with no suffering. Because there’s no sin there. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, part of His prayer was this “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” God’s will is always done in heaven. That’s what makes it so heavenly. The moment sin entered into that garden of paradise, suffering entered in with it. So clearly, the reason we have such suffering in the world is because we have sin in the world.

And that’s the problem with prostitution and illegal drug use and carousing and the like. The Bible defines those activities as “sin”, and with them, comes suffering into the world. Look at the sickness and pain around you, Bill. Look at the wars and the corruption, the terror and the dying. They’re all a direct result of sin.

That’s why the man in your film was so thrilled to be free from the bondage and power of sin. Because he knows the serious consequences for allowing sin to flourish in this world. And now, you do too!

So the next time you hear someone ask “If God is so loving, why does He allow such suffering in the world?” and no doubt you’ve asked this question yourself), know that

there's an easy answer, Bill. When God took on flesh and became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, He never sinned. So, truth is, God is the only one who hasn't allowed suffering in this world, because He's the only one who never sinned. The truth is, we've brought all of this pain and sorrow upon ourselves through our own sinful choices.

## **AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD**

A few times in your film you made this query – “If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He just come back and end all of this evil we see going on?” Good question, again deserving of a good answer. Here it is.

You'll actually find a direct answer to your question in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, chapter 3, verse 9. Speaking of the promise of the second coming of Christ to set up His glorious rule and reign on the earth, it says this “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some count slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (NIV) That's reason number one. He's patiently waiting for men to turn to Him for salvation. At some point, all bets will be off, and Jesus will return. Those who've failed to respond to His call will be hopelessly lost.

So, in a very real sense, any unbeliever could conceivably be the last person God is waiting for to come to repentance, turning from sin, accepting the gift of salvation, and walking in the freedom which Jesus brings. This verse of Scripture spells out unequivocally the reason for His delay. Yes, you, Bill Maher, may be the only reason this whole great event is being held up.

Now here's my second comment on this. Being all powerful doesn't mean that God can do anything and everything. He cannot. Anyone who tells you differently is not telling you the truth (and in a minute, I'll back that up with specific Scripture). The fact is, if God could do everything, He would actually be less powerful than if He couldn't.

For instance, can God get sick? Well, let's say that He could. He would then be a less powerful God. Imagine if God's power was needed at a critical time, and He was just not feeling well enough right then to step in. Being able to do everything, including getting sick, would make God less powerful than the all-powerful Being He is.

Can God die? Again, no. Being able to do that would make Him less powerful. And in fact, there are lots of things that God cannot do. For actual Biblical evidence that God cannot do everything, simply read Titus, chapter 1, verse 2. There it states, no ifs, ands or buts, that God cannot lie.

And here's another thing that God absolutely cannot do. He cannot act contrary to His Word. Jesus Himself explains in Matthew 5:18, that God's Word is immutable. “... not one jot or tittle shall pass until all be fulfilled.” That's another way of saying “God has dotted every ‘i’, and crossed every ‘t’, and will be careful to fulfill everything which was written.” The Lord spoke earlier in Jeremiah 1:12, saying “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that My word is fulfilled.”

Alright, back to your question – “Because God is all-powerful, why doesn’t He just come back and end all of this evil we see going on?” The gentleman you interviewed answered “He will.” And he was correct. But let me elaborate just a bit on that.

In Matthew, chapter 24, Jesus was speaking of the last days, when world history will wind down and His kingdom will be established here on the earth. His disciples asked Him “When will all of this take place?” Jesus’ answer is recorded for us in verse 36. He said “... of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

Evidently, there is a future appointment, scheduled on the calendar of God the Father, noting the exact day and hour when Jesus will return to this earth to set up His kingdom. So until then, God cannot violate His own Word, stepping in at a time other than this appointed time. As believers, we live with the confident trust that He knew exactly what He was doing when he set that particular date and time on His agenda.

### **THE RICK JAMES VERSION**

This wasn’t exactly a question, but at one point in your film, you relate the Old Testament Bible story of a righteous man named Lot, who offers up his daughters to be raped by the vicious men in his community, in a desperate attempt to keep these men from “raping” visiting angels sent by God.

The horror of a “righteous” man making this offer, led you to conclude of the “King James” Bible “I think I could find more morality in the ‘Rick James’ bible.” I laughed harder at that comment than anything else in your film. But now for the serious response.

The Old Testament here relates this story from the early days of man in two of the most wicked cities on earth. It was at a time and a place where, for righteous people, there were simply no good moral options. Every choice made by the very few “good” people in these cities was always “which is the lesser of two horrible evils?”

Shortly after this event, you might remember, God destroyed these cities, as disgusted with the moral condition of man as you and I are just reading about it. Here’s how the story concludes in Genesis 19 “Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”

I’ve got to believe that your ‘Rick James’ comment was made just for the laugh. Obviously, we can’t indict a book as “immoral” simply because it relates historical incidents of immoral periods in man’s history.

## **THE GOSPEL WRITERS**

This too wasn't really a question, but here's what you said to one of your interviewees – "The gospel writers never met Jesus. No one who wrote about Jesus ever met Him." C'mon Bill. Who you tryin' to kid here? We're both intelligent people (not Dennis Miller intelligent, but you know what I mean). Was your fact-checker on drugs? Here's the truth. Both Matthew and John (writers of the two gospels which carry their names) were two of Jesus' disciples, who followed Him throughout His ministry, witnessed His miracles first-hand, and dined with Him at the last supper. John was probably Jesus' closest friend, referred to in the Scriptures as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). I feel that it's important to correct this error, as people who don't know any better will watch your movie and walk away with the impression that, because your statement wasn't challenged, it must be true.

## **THE GOD HORUS**

You questioned a couple of tourists at the Holy Land Experience site in Orlando, Florida, asking why they aren't troubled by the curious parallels between the details of the life of Jesus and the ancient Egyptian god Horus, who preceded Jesus by twelve hundred years or so.

In addition to a number of other "facts" you cited, here are some of the claims made in your film concerning Horus – "the Egyptian Book of the Dead, written in 1280BC, describes a god Horus, who was the son of the god Osiris, born to a virgin on December 25<sup>th</sup>; he was baptized in a river by Anup the Baptizer who was later beheaded; he had twelve disciples; he was crucified, then after three days, this "savior of humanity" as your film calls him, was resurrected.

O.K. First off, you make the claim, for example, that Egyptian Book of the Dead ascribes a birth date of December 25<sup>th</sup> to the god Horus. The onus of responsibility to prove that that detail is actually recorded in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, falls to you, the person making the claim.

Short of that, the only way one could verify your claim would be to obtain a copy of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, (easier said than done as no single papyrus contains all known chapters); then take upon themselves the responsibility of reading the entire text (my research indicates 192 unique chapters) to determine whether or not such a detail indeed appears.

You on the other hand, would simply need to cite the location in the Egyptian Book of the Dead where the statement is made – which page, which chapter, which verse, which paragraph, which "spell number" (as this is one of the ways the book is divided, so I understand). Then, one could simply go to the source material to confirm your assertion. Not willing to do all that research work, I'll put forth the following two refutations.

First, whether or not a birth date of December 25<sup>th</sup> is ascribed to this ancient god is a moot point, as nowhere in the Bible is December 25<sup>th</sup> or any other date suggested for the birth of Jesus.

Secondly, Horus most certainly did not die by crucifixion, as the timeframe for his life predates by hundreds of years, the invention of death by crucifixion. These two facts alone make all your other assertions highly suspect.

Again, to genuinely satisfy me or anyone else who has viewed your film, we would need to see specific quotes from within the text of the Egyptian Book of the Dead to authenticate your claims. No such information is provided in the movie, and in fact, you didn't even make the pretense of an attempt to authenticate your claims. You simply put it out there for public consumption. I don't see enough here to shake anybody's faith.

Now let's keep moving forward, as I believe this next section will really help to unravel some other spiritual tangles.

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