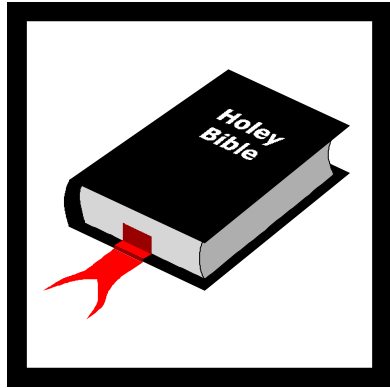


# Questions for Bible-Thumpers



The following are questions I have about the Bible and Christianity. I've asked most of them of folks who have written to complain about my site. I have not yet received adequate answers.

I realize that not all Christians are Bible-thumpers, and not all Bible-thumpers believe exactly the same thing. When answering these questions, feel free to skip those that do not apply to you. It might be helpful to explain why a certain question does not apply, but it's not required.

## **The KJV Bible as the literal word of God:**

There are no questions in this section, because I don't consider it worthwhile discussing things with people who actually believe that God spoke to Moses in Elizabethan English. For The KJV Bible to be the literal word of God, that's exactly what would have had to happen, that's what literal means: exactly, word for word, what someone said.

## **The Bible as the word of God:**

Where in the bible, if anywhere, does the Bible say it is the Word of God?

How do you know this applies to the Bible as we know it today, and not some other collection of books? For example, how do you know it refers to the gospels of John, Mark, Luke and Matthew, and not the gospel of Simon, Thomas, and Peter?

What's to keep someone from writing whatever they want, or altering existing stories to fit their need, then using this passage to prove God wrote it? Today, of course, we could compare with other versions of the Bible, but what about hundreds or thousands of years ago? Did God correct the mistakes and strike down the blasphemers?

Depending on your answer to the last question, tell me how you feel about the fact that God Himself typed this page. Jim's name is just on it for legal reasons. By the way: I, your Creator, say you're a poop head, the Bible is bogus, and you should send Reverend Jim 10% of your gross income.

The Bible, The Koran, The Book of Mormon, and other books are supposedly the word of God. Many other works are supposedly inspired by God, gods, god-like aliens from the Pleiades, etc. Why should I accept your favorite, and not one of the others?

If God has personally told you that the Bible is His word, why should this out-weigh his personal communication to me saying that it isn't?

## **Biblical Inerrancy:**

I claim that the Bible contains contradictions, errors of fact, and suspicious omissions...especially regarding matters of physical science. A number of people have tried to explain away these errors. I am not impressed. If you intend to defend Biblical inerrancy with one or more of the following arguments, please be prepared to answer the associated objections. You do not need to reply to answers to objections that you don't plan to use. If you see the Bible as containing mostly metaphor, as opposed to literal truth, you can skip down to the section on Biblical Metaphor.

## **If you claim that there are no apparent flaws in the Bible, and thus there is nothing to explain, Why do I see flaws?**

If your answer involves a defect in my mental ability, why is it more likely that I suffer from this disorder than you?

If your answer involves a lack of faith on my part, how does this apply to Islamic fundamentalists, who are quite willing to die for their faith?

*If your answer involves rude comments about my parentage, please keep it to yourself.*

## **If you claim that the apparent flaws in the Bible are the result of misrepresentations and passages taken out of context:**

Why is it so easy for me to distort the word of God? Shouldn't an all-powerful, all-knowing being be able to write more clearly?

Why should I believe that your religion's leaders are not similarly distorting the word of God for their own selfish gain?

## **If you claim the King James Version is linguistically flawed due to archaic language and / or poor translation:**

Why did God allow this to happen?

If God allows flaws in some versions of the Bible, Why should we presume that he corrected any version?

Why should I accept your favorite version as being the one version God decided to correct?

*If you rely on "original" versions in a variety of archaic languages, please pay special attention to the next set of questions.*



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**If you claim it requires extensive interpretation, study and research to properly understand the Bible:**

Why did God make his word so hard to understand?

Why should I accept your favorite interpretation as being correct?

Why not just study nature instead, as science does? There is, after all, no chance that nature is a fraud.

**If you claim it requires divine revelation to properly understand the Bible:**

Why is your personal revelation endorsing the Bible superior to my personal revelation condemning the Bible?

Why should we accept divine revelations that point to the Bible while rejecting revelations that point to the Koran, The Vedas, The Kalevala, or any of countless other texts?

If revelation is a reliable source of information, why not just rely on it, instead of a book?

**If you claim apparent contradictions are the result of metaphoric use of language:**

Why did God make his word so hard to understand?

Why should I accept your guess as to which parts are metaphoric, and which are literal?

When I use metaphor, I use it to get around the limitations of language and the human mind. If you assume God uses metaphor for the same reason, why would he have created those limitations in the first place? If you assume God uses metaphor for a different reason, please explain that reason.

**Occasionally people write to tell me they see the Bible as just another inspirational work:**

What do you find inspiring about the atrocities that constitute much of the Old Testament?

What do you find inspiring about the New Testament's message of eternal damnation for those who fail to embrace exactly the right set of beliefs?

Why should I slog through the racism, sexism, absurdities and atrocities to find the occasional bit of inspiration when there are thousands of other inspirational works available?

Why should I rely on any book for inspiration when sunsets, flowers, and big piles of sauerkraut with wieners chopped up in them are all readily available?

**Gays:**

Most Christians are pretty nice folk, but one loathsome sort of Christian uses the Bible to justify homophobia, gay bashing, and a lack of compassion towards those suffering from AIDS. I have little tolerance for this, as the tone of these questions might suggest:

If AIDS is God's punishment to Gays for anal intercourse, does that mean lung cancer is God's punishment for smoking? If so, do you plan to picket Aunt Mildred's funeral carrying signs saying "God hates Smokers?"

If AIDS is God's punishment for sex, why is a little piece of rubber so effective at preventing it? Are all sins absolved when committed in conjunction with rubber, or just those related to sex? Can I, for example, worship graven images so long as they're made out of rubber?

In forty years do you expect your discrimination against gays be more or less embarrassing to your grandchildren than your grandparents' discrimination against blacks is to you? You may, of course, skip this question as irrelevant if you're a racist too.

**Christian Metaphysics:**

Can anyone explain?

Why did God sacrifice Himself to Himself so that He could correct a mistake He made Himself?

How does the crucifixion count as an appropriate sacrifice? Jesus spent a few hours, maybe a day, in agonizing pain; but it was no greater pain than millions of others have suffered. If Jesus really is God, then He knew exactly what was happening, and exactly how long it would last. When it was done, He supposedly ascended to heaven and became the all-powerful ruler of the universe. This is infinitely greater compensation than even the faithful will receive, and infinitely less torture that the damned will receive.

Please reconcile these two statements: "Without evil, there can be no good", "God is all-good."

Please reconcile these two statements: "With God, nothing is impossible", "You can't be saved unless you accept Jesus as your savior."

**Extra-Credit Questions:**

If you answered any question beginning "Why did God..." by saying it is not our place to question God, explain why you feel free to question his decision to make me an Atheist.

List at least three ways God is better than Santa Claus. Here's my list of ways Santa is better:

1. The only punishment Santa delivers is a withholding of presents. Even at that, he usually brings coal. Useful stuff, coal.
2. If you're not good enough, Santa gives you another chance next year.
3. The evidence for the existence of Santa is much stronger: I get presents from Santa and hear radar-tracking reports about Santa on the news every year. Millions have even seen Santa. I am among them. Even if 99.99999% of the sighting are false, that's still certain proof of Santa.
4. Santa doesn't care if you believe in him, only if you're good or bad.

If there is an afterlife, why hasn't Isaac Asimov or Carl Sagan written books about it yet? "Paper burns" is not an acceptable answer. Funny, in a twisted sort of way, but not acceptable. (Lest anyone mistake my feeling, these men were among the greatest intellects to ever walk the face of the Earth, and I miss them both terribly.)

Why do Christians assume that the parable "Kissing Hank's Ass" is about them?

**If you only have time to answer one Question:**

There are many books that are so good that once I start reading them, I can't put them down. The Bible is not one of them. How is it that God, or an author directly inspired by God, does not write as well as (for example) Michael Crichton?