

WE CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS

Bill Crews

Many people are critical of God — some even using it as their primary reason for rejecting His very existence. For one reason or the other, they are critical of Him because He does not: (1) directly intervene to protect innocent from serious birth defects, fatal injuries, or crippling diseases; (2) directly intervene to stop evil political rulers from oppressing and preying upon the weak and vulnerable; (3) directly intervene to spare “good” people the suffering brought on by disease and accidents; (4) directly intervene to keep evil people from harming innocent people; and, (5) directly intervene to keep earthquakes, storms, floods, and volcanic eruptions from taking human lives.

At the same time they do not want God: (1) to take away their freedom to choose; (2) to take away their powers to reason; (3) to remove personal responsibility for one’s actions; or, (4) to change the immutable laws of nature. Well, we can’t have it both ways. It would have to be one or the other, with all of the consequences that ensue.

The physical universe is regulated by immutable physical laws (which we call “the laws of nature”). We can’t change them, and God certainly won’t. We must learn them, accept them, and respect them. We can rely on them and be blessed and benefited by them. Or we can remain ignorant of them, ignore them, defy them, and challenge them — and suffer the consequences. We must not expect God to protect us from “the laws of nature”, while we ignore, or fail to respect, or even challenge, and defy these laws.

Man is a free moral agent, able to learn, understand, and apply God’s immutable, spiritual laws. Man is able to (and expected to) choose between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, and wisdom and folly. If he couldn’t choose to do wrong, he couldn’t choose to do right either — he would be another animal and not a free moral agent. Each person is responsible for the choices he makes and will be held accountable by God — to whom he must one day give answer. God will “balance the books” and mete out justice.

Each one is a part of a world of people. And anyone can carelessly risk or deliberately destroy his own life, or carelessly endanger or ruin his own health, or abuse and misuse his own body, or pollute and corrupt his own mind, or defile and lose his own soul. Each one can also mislead, or deceive, or pain, or grieve, or harm those around him —

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Three and a half millennia ago, God flooded the planet because “*the earth was filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:11). Violence remains a problem, to be sure, but to say it is worse now is ignorant.

Owing to their sexual deviancy, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown by the Almighty with fire from heaven (Jude 7), which happened nearly four thousand years ago. Perverts still corrupt the earth, that cannot be denied, but none now living can know it to be worse.

Twenty-six centuries past, Jehovah sent His own chosen nation Judah into seventy years of exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11) because they refused to quit worshiping idols (2:5). To say that religious inclinations are drifting further from the God of heaven than they ever have is naïve, to say the least.

Sin is terrible. It is universal in scope and eternal in consequence. It ought to disturb the righteous sensibilities of all who honor the Lord. Nonetheless, it accomplishes nothing worthwhile to exaggerate the situation. Unlike the problem of sin, which is “*nothing new*,” there is “*newness*” in Christ (Romans 6:4; 2nd Corinthians 5:17), who is the permanent solution to the constant problem of sin!

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physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, or spiritually. Or each one can do the opposite.

Acts 17:24-28 says, “*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’”*

Jesus told Satan that man is not to tempt God (Matthew 4:7). But this is what we do when we want the world both ways. Let’s learn to respect, to cooperate with, to observe, and to be blessed and benefited by the wonderful laws of God, both the physical and the spiritual — and not always yearning to have our cake and eat it too. It can’t be done!

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's/Women's Studies

@ 6:30 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belen, New Mexico

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS..."**

RESTORE SUCH A ONE"

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"Grace is forgiveness of sin, not approval of it."

– Jared Wilson

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Bryan Dockens

The tendency to reflect on the past as the so-called "good old days" is a widespread and long-lasting phenomenon. Even Solomon addressed the habit nearly three thousand years ago: *"Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For you do not inquire wisely concerning this"* (Ecclesiastes 7:10).

That he spoke to this practice so long ago should give immediate pause to modern readers. No one now living could accurately perceive the past as an improvement over the present if the Preacher could criticize this saying so very long ago. A major theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is that human behavior, as a whole – not speaking of individual actions, remains essentially unchanged over the long course of history. *"That which has been is what will be. That which is done is what will be done. And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new?' It has already been in ancient times before us"* (1:9-10).

Perceptions about a past that was morally or spiritually superior are owing to mankind's forgetfulness more than any other cause. *"There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after"* (1:11).

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