

Tough Bible Questions: Part 1

By [Nathan Jones](#)

Have you ever found yourself faced with trying to come up with a good answer to a tough Bible question?

Dr. Ron Rhodes, is the founder and director of [Reasoning From the Scriptures Ministries](#). He is an expert on the Bible, and one of the things that he specializes in is answering tough questions about the Bible. The following are tough Bible questions Dr. Rhodes answered for our audience.

Q) What do you think is the number one argument you get from atheists and how do you respond?

A) One of the questions I get asked is if God is all-powerful and if God is all-good, how come bad things happen on planet earth. I get asked that question all the time.

I'd like to answer that question by giving an illustration. Let's say that you built the perfect house, I mean it's just a beautiful, wonderful house. The construction is perfect, it's got excellent materials. Maybe fifteen years later you've got this termite invasion and it just eats away at the foundation and eats away at the walls. The question becomes, does the existence of termites in that house disprove the existence of an architect? Does it? Obviously not. What about arson? Somebody comes in and throws a match in there and burns the whole place up, does that disprove the existence of an architect? Not at all. What if you have sloppy home owners that don't cut the lawn? Does this disprove the existence of an architect? Not at all, it just means that something good has been corrupted. The house was good but now it's got termites. It's been corrupted. And that's what evil is — evil is the corruption of something good.

Now by analogy, God created the earth and you remember what God said when He completed the creation? He looked out over it all and said it is good. But the earth has since become corrupted. And you know what caused it? It was a termite invasion of human sin, that's what brought evil into the universe. So, we shouldn't really be blaming God on this, we should be blaming ourselves.

Q) If God is really a God of love, why didn't He just put an end to evil?

A) Let's just say that at midnight tonight God is going to say, "Evil is over." I don't like that option because at midnight tonight Ron Rhodes is gone. In fact, everyone is gone. So, I'm kind of glad God is patient with us.

You know one thing God did as soon as man got himself into this trouble with this termite invasion of sin is He engaged in a rescue mission for us. And He's been

involved in that rescue mission ever since and it's all based on Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, so that's the good news.

God did give us free choice, but you know some people try to blame God for that. But, look at it this way, Henry Ford created the Ford car. It was a good car. But let's say that some man decides to drive that car after drinking some alcohol. He drives down the street and crashes into a building. You see, are we going to say that Henry Ford is a bad man for creating the Ford? No. He's not the person who did something wrong. It's the man who used his free will to drink alcohol, to do something wrong, before he drove. You see, that's the person who is at blame. So I don't think that we should blame God for giving us free will. I've never seen a person walking down the street saying, you know with one of those signs that says, "Down with Free Will" or "Back to Bondage."

Q) Why didn't God create us without free will and just say you're going to obey me and do what I tell you to and everything is going to be nice and fine?

A) I think that if God had created a bunch of those little robots, you know like where you pull the string on the back and it says, "I love you," just imagine an entire universe of those. Would that bring glory to God? Not really, you just pull it and it goes, "I worship thee O Lord God." I mean that doesn't bring glory to God.

What would bring glory to God is if God created free human beings, many of whom are going to choose to freely follow Him and worship Him for all eternity. Of course the very gift of free will also means that some people will misuse that free will. Some people will choose against God. But as C.S. Lewis put it, in the end this scenario brings much more glory to God than a universe of robots.

Q) What does Apologetics mean?

A) It sounds like we're always going around saying "I'm sorry," but in fact what we're doing is defending Christianity against any challenge whatsoever. It might be Atheism, Agnosticism, it might be the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons. It might be Islam. There's all kinds of challenges against Christianity, so what we do is to help provide solid strong answers that people can use to reach those people for Christ.

Q) What would you say is the key most important thing to understanding the Bible?

A) Three words: context, context, context.

Every word of the Bible is part of a sentence, every sentence is part of a paragraph, every paragraph is part of a book, and every book in the Bible is part of the entire Bible. So there's both an immediate context of each verse and

there's a broader context. And the best way to make sure that you're interpreting rightly is to consult both, the immediate context and the broader context.

For example, there's a verse in Matthew 5:48 that says, "*Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.*" Some people read that and they go, "Oh gees, I gotta be absolutely perfect to go to Heaven. Uh oh, not good." Because you know, we're not perfect. None of us are.

When you look at the context, what you see is a discussion about love. You see the Jewish Pharisees said that you're supposed to love your neighbors but hate your enemies. Jesus said no you love your neighbors and you love your enemies, you are to be perfect in loving other people as the Heavenly Father is perfect.

You see that's the context, it's all about love. So that helps us to understand what this verse is really talking about. It's not saying that we must attain some perfection to go to Heaven, but rather it's saying that we should be complete in loving other people day to day.

Q) People are always trying to prove that Revelation 20 does not mean what it says, when it says that Jesus is coming back to reign for a thousand years. And what they do is they go over and pick up that Psalm that says God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. They say, "Now are there only a thousand hills? No, there's many more so therefore the word thousand is always symbolic and never literal." Is there a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ?

A) People often approach the book of Revelation with what we call pre-understandings in the theological world. People approach the text with a pre-understanding of the theological system that governs the way they interpret those verses and you know what? What you really need to do is to have what they call a circular system of interpretation. All of us have some kind of a system of theology, but what I'm saying is that the system of theology must be subject to the Bible. It should always be tested against the Bible. And if you come across a verse real clear like Revelation 20 and that contradicts your theological system, guess what, you need to rewrite your theological system.

I think that the kingship of Christ was prophesied back in the original covenant. You look at the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, prophesied about a King who would rule forever who would sit on the throne of David. And we're not talking about some sort of spiritual thing up in a twilight zone Heaven. We're talking about a real throne on a real earth. And so if you interpret Scripture in a literal fashion, you're going to come out believing in a literal one thousand year period.

To give an English illustration, you know if you use the word "trunk" that can refer to the front of an elephant, the rear end of a man, the back of a car, it can refer to

a suitcase. I mean just depending upon the context a word can mean a whole lot of different things. And one of the big mistakes that first year seminary students make is assuming that because a word is used one way in one context it has to mean the same thing in every other verse and that's a mistake.

When the plain sense makes good sense why seek any other sense? That's one of the things that I base my entire interpretive methodology on. And yet today we've got all kinds of people reading all kinds of things into the Bible. If people would just let the Bible speak for itself. Guess what guys? Who created human language? Who was it? God! God created linguistic symbols called words by which He communicates with man through revelation. And in most cases, God communicates in a normal, every day means. Now it is true that there are some verses that are poetic like in the Psalms and so forth, but you know most of the time when God is communicating in statements of fact. And when the plain sense makes good sense why seek any other sense?

One of the reasons that people spiritualize so much is because they become God when they do so, because they can make the Scriptures mean anything they want it to mean. The cults are experts at that. You know they'll take a verse and they'll make it say something entirely foreign to the original context. And frankly we've got a crisis in the church today because many Christians don't know the Bible very well.

And that's all the more reason for people to get back to the Bible and when you're reading Scripture verses remember that rule — "when the plain sense makes good sense don't seek any other sense."

Q) What is the evolutionist's strongest argument?

A) Very often it seems like today the real attack from the Evolutionist is coming against Intelligent Design. I think that's got them running scared. Remember that old preacher who was preaching a sermon and he came to a weak part in the sermon and he had on his sermon notes "pound pulpit, weak point." That kind of reminds me of what these Atheists are doing. They know that they're cornered by intelligent design.

I think DNA is a great place to start. I don't think you can look anywhere and not find Intelligent Design. You can look into a microscope you can look into a telescope and find evidence for Intelligent Design. You know just in terms of the DNA factor, did you know that just a single pinpoint of DNA, you can find as much information as four complete sets of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Now you know the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is thirty volumes with small print. That's a lot of information in there. So the question is natural, did it write itself? Did the *Encyclopedia Britannica* write itself? Do software programs right themselves?

We as human beings think we might have had a better design for certain things. But look at it this way, I might look at a computer system and say, "You know, I think I could design this computer to where it would be much smaller." But then I go and talk to the engineer and the engineer tells me, "Ah, but the reason why it's got a big casing like that is to provide for the cooling system because of the internal heating of the components." Well now I've got new information that alters the way that I'm looking at things. And the fact is, is that God has many reasons, many of which we don't know about as to why He created certain things in certain ways. And so, I think that one day when it's too late for a lot of people once they've passed over, they're gonna say, "Wow, boy I was wrong after all there really is an Intelligent Designer and it really does make sense."

Naturalism refers to the idea that nature explains everything, you don't need a God, you don't need supernatural miracles. But what if the science that has been supporting Naturalism for so many years turns on Naturalism and starts to provide scientific arguments against Naturalism. That's what we're seeing today in Intelligent Design and I think that's one of the reasons why they're so vitriolic against the Intelligent Design movement.

I was talking to Lee Strobel about how Lee used to be an Atheist and he said, "Ron, you know one of the things that kept me an Atheist was not specific belief systems, one of the things that kept me an Atheist was the fact that it made my lifestyle real comfortable. I could do anything I wanted and I didn't have to answer to an external God; I didn't have to obey commands." So, if you end up believing that there is an Intelligent Designer who created the universe that means that you and I are responsible to obey that Creator. And that means a change in lifestyle is in order. A lot of atheists don't want to make that change.

Q) What is the strongest argument for Evolution and how can Christians counter that?

A) One of the arguments that very often comes up in support of Evolution is that they believe that the fossil evidence supports their viewpoint. I really don't think it does support their viewpoint. And the reason that I say that is that we've discovered virtually billions of fossils all over the world and if Evolution were true what you would expect to see is simple life forms evolving into complex life forms. You'd expect to see fossils of simple life forms and then on the next layer of rock you would expect to see a little bit more advanced creatures. And then each new layer of rock would bring all new fossils that are supposedly growing wings and different body parts and stuff like that, but we don't see that. There are no transitional forms in the fossil record. You know what it looks like in the fossil record? It looks like all of a sudden all these life forms suddenly exploded on the scene and got fossilized. All of them are fully formed. That seems to support Creationism.

I think also that these people also assume what's called Uniformitarianism, the idea that things have been going along at the same pace throughout all human

history. But what I believe as a Creationist is that when the flood occurred the entire world was upset in a catastrophic way. All of a sudden you had layer upon layer of mud coming upon each other with dead creatures being captured within that layer of mud and I think that explains a lot of the layers that we presently see today. It doesn't represent this incredible length of time as some of these Evolutionists like to talk about, but it's a shorter time.

Q) What difference does it make who cares whether God created the world instantly or whether He created it over a long period of time?

A) Can you trust your Bible? I mean, when you look at the Genesis account it's talking about the creation days in terms of light and darkness in terms of morning and evening. And you need to consider the fact that the Hebrew word for day whenever it's used with a number always refers to a literal 24 hour a day. If you cannot trust the book of Genesis in its plain statements of fact about creation, what makes you think you can trust anything else in the Bible?

And so, there's much more than the creation itself at stake — it's the entire Bible with the entire message of the Bible. And that spells disaster for you if you're looking for redemption in Christ. How do you know you can trust those verses about redemption in Christ if you cannot trust the Bible?

Thank you, Dr. Rhodes, for the answers to these tough Bible questions! Dr. Rhodes will answer more questions in Part 2.