



DID JESUS DIE FOR THEISTS?

1 John 2:2: (NIV)

He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

He (Jesus) is the



Atheism - for many of us who profess Christianity, even hearing the word conjures up a need to defend oneself and one's faith. Sometimes we envision an atheist as one whose objective in life is to ridicule not only us, but also the mechanism of our faith and not just the mechanism of our faith but also the very object of our faith - God Almighty. So what do we have? We have envisioned atheism as an enemy - as an object of our disdain. But wait a minute! Jesus clearly taught us to love our enemies, so what does that mean? Did Jesus himself love those who profess atheism? Did Jesus die for atheists? If so, then how should we show them the love of Christ?

athe-ism: *noun* 1 archaic: ungodliness, wickedness

2 a: a disbelief in the existence of deity b: the doctrine that there is no deity

The above is oversimplified, as many atheists will tell you.

...Philosophers such as Antony Flew and Michael Martin have contrasted positive (strong/hard) atheism with negative (weak/soft) atheism. Positive atheism is the explicit affirmation that gods do not exist. Negative atheism includes all other forms of non-theism. According to this categorization, anyone who is not a theist is either a negative or a positive atheist. Weak (negative) atheism is defined as simply the absence of belief in gods or the absence of theism. This is also the broad, general definition of atheism. The definition of weak atheism is used as a contrast to the definition of strong atheism, which is the positive assertion that no gods exist. All atheists are necessarily weak atheists because by definition all atheists do not believe in any gods; only some go on to assert that some or no gods exist. Strong (positive) atheism is defined either as the general position that denies the existence of any gods or the limited position that denies the existence of some specific god (but not necessarily others). The first definition is the most common and what most people understand as the definition of strong atheism. The second definition is used in specific contexts when trying to explain atheists' varying approaches to the question of the existence of gods.

AGNOSTIC 1: a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable; broadly: one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god 2: a person who is unwilling to commit to an opinion about something <political agnostics>

For our purposes, we will describe atheism with the following observations in mind:

1. Atheism does not believe in deities of any form - by "deity," we mean a being or object deemed worthy of worship by some for its perceived power beyond that of human form.
2. Atheism is not a self-contained philosophy; rather it is a basis from which any number of philosophies may develop.
3. Atheism perceives humanity to be at the top of earth's discovered "food chain."
4. Therefore, atheism is a clear basis for humanism - humanity can solve its own problems and does not need a deity.

hu-man-ism: *noun* A system of values and beliefs that is based on the idea that people are basically good and that problems can be solved using reason instead of religion.

Atheism generally brings us to humanism - a philosophy with an atheistic foundation. Our philosophy of Christianity comes from a belief in God Almighty. We can make comparisons between the two philosophies - Christianity and humanism.

With each program segment, we are going to provide one scriptural tidbit that gives the right scientific answer that could not have been known at the time it was written.

(Source: www.godsplan.org) *What Holds the Earth Up?* Three thousand years ago the Hindu scriptures recorded the earth was resting on the backs of several huge elephants. The elephants were resting on the back of a very large turtle that was swimming in a sea. Greek mythology claims that the god Atlas was holding the earth on his shoulders. But our Bible says in Job 26:7 "[God] hangeth the earth on nothing." What a remarkable statement of fact. The earth is suspended in space. Nothing is holding it up. Job wrote about the same time the Hindu scripture was written. How did Job know this scientific fact? Only God could have revealed this to Job.

Adam's choice led to a life of sin and an end of death - not only him but for his posterity as well: Genesis 3:17-19: The dying process included a life now to be built within the confines of imperfection, which meant toil and failure on a regular basis. This fulfilled God's word - any lesser consequence would make God unreliable. Is this fair? After all, I wasn't the one who sinned. Why must I suffer for what Adam did? Sin is not fair, but we can all learn from the experience. So, where was God going with this consequence of sin and death?



A portion of the curse on Satan: Genesis 3:15: Essentially this would be a battle to the death. Satan as the serpent would be bruised on the head - that is the way to kill a snake. This was a veiled promise - life is on the line - something would happen through the posterity of Adam and Eve that would curtail sin. This gives us a hint of how God is going to solve the problem. **A portion of the curse on Adam:** Genesis 3:19-22: Death is the certain penalty for sin. The Garden of Eden had been planted with the ability to perpetuate life. Once outside of the Garden, life would be very difficult. That was the process of dying through sin. ²⁰Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. ²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. So, there had to be an animal sacrifice made to cover the nakedness of sinful man. Blood was shed, perhaps as a symbol to show that sin brings shame which leads to death; all need covering with a sacrificed life. ²²Then the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. We assume the tree of life had the capability of sustaining human life indefinitely. Finally, we see there was a banishing from eternal earthly life - this is a major part of what was lost. The whole of the human race would now be brought forth outside of the original state of perfection. In giving the consequence - like any good father - God gave hope for the future. Do atheists have a role in that hope?

(Source: www.godsplan.org) **Flat Versus Round Earth** For thousands of years people believed the earth was flat. If one went too far, he would fall over the edge. This was taught in both Hindu and Buddhist scripture. In the 1500s, the first ship sailed around the world. This provided empirical proof for many that the world was round. But the round earth was recorded in the Judeo-Christian Bible long before. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 40:22 spoke of the "circle of the earth." Solomon wrote, "He [God] set a compass [circle] upon the face of the deep," Proverbs 8:27. In our century, Arabs spoke of infidels being pushed over the edge into space. About 3,000 years ago, our Bible said the earth was round.

The following text is a really good place to begin to define the destiny of all humanity: Romans 5:12-14: Adam was entirely responsible for inherited human sin. Death reigned even before the Law was given - therefore the penalty was clearly upon all humanity. Romans 5:15-21: (NASB) ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, (the "many" MUST mean all humanity according to the above context) much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (This MUST mean the same "many") ¹⁶The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, (again, whom did death reign over? Everyone!) Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Aha! There IS a qualifier here applying to the called out ones! This shows a reign - an authority - for them that they are given.) ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (Okay - no qualifier - all humanity MUST be included) ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous. (Again - this is about ALL humanity) ²⁰The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace replaces sin on a wholesale scale! There are two types of "bridges" or ways mentioned:

1. "All," who eventually get justification by the grace of God (The bridge for the "everyone else" is a broad bridge to a Day of Judgment, which is a day of accountability. Those will have work to do to put them in line with the will of God);
2. "The few," who reign in Jesus. (The bridge for the called out ones is a narrow way, a difficult way, a way of sacrifice. It is a bridge over death to heaven.)

What do you do with the many "good people" in this world who do not believe in God or Jesus? We believe the plan of God has a tremendous answer! Many atheists are wonderful people too! Atheists are humanists - they believe humanity can solve its own problems. We have a track record of humanistic behavior over many years. Instead of arguing with an atheist whether God exists or not, let's talk about the philosophies. How has Christianity worked or not worked - and many interpretations of Christianity have not worked, as they have been corrupted - but



how has humanism worked? We see often the atheists that get press are the ones complaining about Christianity (and religion) for the world's ills.

(Source: Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century) Milton Leitenberg, CORNELL UNIVERSITY PEACE STUDIES PROGRAM, OCCASIONAL PAPER #29 3rd ed. ©August 2003, 2005, 2006 "A Beastly Century:" It was a phrase used by Margaret Drabble, a British novelist, in an address to the Royal Society of Literature in London, on December 14, 2000. But of course it was no more than a human century. In 1994, the historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote that 187 million people were "killed or allowed to die by human decision" in what he called the "short century" - a period of about 75 years from 1914 to 1991. The period chosen by Hobsbawm spanned the beginning of World War I to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Soviet occupation of its Eastern European "allies." Given that Hobsbawm is a Marxist historian, his choice of the category "by human decision" was particularly significant. However, the sum that he provided was low by just about 44 million people for the full twentieth century, during which approximately 231 million people died in wars and conflict and, in very large numbers, "by human decision." ... This is a humanist perspective and does not include death from so-called "holy wars" over religion. By human decision in the 20th century, 231 million people were eradicated. What is the track record of humanism? Not so good...it has brought us down a very dark path.

(Source: www.godsplan.org) *The Bottom of the Ocean* Until modern times people thought the ocean floor was sandy like the desert and saucer shaped - deepest in the middle. This was even true of the pre-1900 geologists. But in the 1900s oceanographers found the sea had many deep valleys or canyons. The deepest canyons were called trenches. The Marianas Trench in the Pacific is so deep that if Mt. Everest (29,000 feet high) were dropped into it, the peak would still be a mile below the water's surface. There are also underwater mountains. The Atlantic Ocean contains an undersea range of mountains 10,000 miles long. In addition, 3,000 years ago the Judeo-Christian Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains of the sea. In Psalm 18:15 (NIV) David wrote of God being the creator of "the valleys of the sea." God asked Job (38:16 NIV): "Have you walked in the recesses [valleys] of the sea?" The prophet Jonah was thrown off a ship and spoke of falling to the bottom of the mountains in the sea (Jonah 2:6). The... Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains of the sea thousands of years before scientists discovered them. Science has finally caught up to what the Bible revealed thousands of years ago! Our faith is built upon reason in Scripture.

(Source: www.godsplan.org) *The Paths of the Sea* In the 1800s, Matthew Maury, an officer in the United States Navy believed his Bible. One day Maury was reading Psalm 8. He was amazed that verse 8 spoke of the fish and all creatures that swim in the "paths of the sea." "Paths of the sea" - how could this be? He never knew there was such a thing. He was determined to find them. Maury discovered that the oceans have many paths or currents, which were like rivers flowing through the sea. Maury wrote the first book on oceanography and became known as "the pathfinder of the seas" and "The father of modern navigation." Maury received his idea about ocean currents from reading Psalm 8:8 which was written about 3,000 years ago by King David. David wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God and probably never actually saw an ocean. Incidentally, Psalm 8:8 also spoke of fish in the "paths of the seas." All fishing boats make a good catch in the currents or paths of the sea. They have learned this is where the fish swim.

1 Timothy 4:10: (KJV) *For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.*

Two different pathways are shown here. Jesus is the Savior of *all men*, but especially those who believe - those called out ones. Two classes of people, both who receive positive effects from the ransom price Jesus paid for the sin of Adam.

Jesus' role for the believer is as an advocate, on the side of the believer: **1 John 2:1-2:** (NASB) *¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. This advocate relationship is describing those for whom Jesus stands or (the believers) vs. those for whom he mediates.*

Jesus' role for the non-believer is as a mediator, intervening between the two sides of God and mankind: **1 Timothy 2:5-6:** (NASB) *⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. There are two different classes of people with positive effects from the ransom of Jesus. This also answers the question about how faith really works! The plan of God is comprehensive including humanists, atheists and those who believe in reincarnation. Jesus' ransom includes all because it canceled out Adam's sin. A perfect man for a perfect man. **1 Peter 2:7-10:** (NASB) *⁷...but for those who disbelieve... ⁸A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. (So, unbelievers are here separated out as "disobedient" and in a prophesied position.) ⁹But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. On the contrary, the chosen are elevated to several titles - what do**



those titles mean? With each title comes responsibility. **One more title that helps to answer this question:** Hebrews 12:23: (KJV) *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, When we think of the firstborn, what do we think of?* Exodus 12:13: (NASB) *The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.* The passing over of the firstborn in Egypt was a picture of the role Christianity plays right now. The firstborn is a representation of the true followers of Christ. Through the firstborn, everybody else is saved. 1 Corinthians 5:7: (NASB) *Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.* What do we have? Sacrifice + blood = Deliverance! Who for? The firstborn first, but then the whole nation afterwards! Jesus died for the atheists, too. The end result is nothing but good. The path is different, but both paths lead to freedom!

(Source: www.godsplan.org) *Lightning, Thunder and Rain* In ancient times, most religious scripture taught that lightning bolts were missiles thrown in anger by their gods. Since rain is so necessary to life, ancient people pondered what caused it. Some tried to stab holes in the clouds with spears. The Vedas (Hindu scripture) advised to tie a frog with its mouth open to the right tree and say the right words and rain would fall. Job stated (28:26): "God made decrees [rules] for the rain. And He set a way for the lightning of the thunder." About 300 years ago, Galileo discovered the "rules for the rain" or water cycle that Job talked about. The sun evaporates water from the ocean. That water vapor rises and becomes clouds. This water in the clouds falls back to earth as rain, collects in streams and rivers and makes its way back to the ocean. That process repeats itself again and again. But amazingly the Scriptures described this cycle centuries before. The prophet Amos (9:6) wrote that God "calls for the water of the sea. He pours them out on the land." Amos wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God. The Bible described this thousands of years before anyone had a clue!

God is worth worshipping because He has integrity: Isaiah 55:8-11: Just as the cycles of nature are regular and predictable, so is His word. They have a purpose He will accomplish. The resounding theme of the Bible is that God is in control, there is a plan for all of mankind and Jesus is the center on which all of this balances. We see justice fulfilled and love, wisdom and mercy shown in this plan.

The Bible tells us there are things that God cannot do: Hebrews 6:16-19: (ASV) ¹⁶*For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation.* ¹⁷*Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath;* ¹⁸*that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us:* ¹⁹*which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil...* **God cannot lie! Two immutable things: The Word of God and the Oath of God.**

Here is another thing God cannot do - and it is so important for faith: 2 Timothy 2:11-13: God cannot deny Himself and cannot lie. If you believe these two things to be true, we have a God who can be trusted for what He has said. We cannot just drop into Scripture and say, "God ordered the destruction of nations in the Old Testament," or "In Revelation, God talks about destruction by fire and brimstone." Yes, but we have to understand how these Scriptures fit and that takes a lifetime of study. You can't just drop into this holy book with prophecies from thousands of years ago that have come true precisely and exactly and that revealed science thousands of years ago that mankind could not have known, without being willing to see the whole picture. Commit yourself to understanding the big picture. **What do we all really want for humanity? Peace - harmony - good will. It is coming!** Micah 4:1-5: The deepest, most significant desire of mankind is for peace on earth and goodwill to men. The good news is that humanism is not going to accomplish this. Why is that good news? Because God Almighty, Creator of the universe, the Being behind the Holy Bible told us unequivocally this is going to happen. He sent His son Jesus Christ as a ransom for sin, so all man can have an opportunity for life, peace and harmony.

**So, did Jesus die for atheists? (Yes! And everybody else!)
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**