

# **Bible Stories**

(Rev. 05/25)

## Angels. What are they and what do they do?

Surprisingly, I've only been asked about angels maybe a dozen times in the last 20+ years. (Three of them occurred in this round of NDQ!) So, with that, let's dig in:

First, depending on your translation of the Bible, angels are mentioned around 250 times!

Second, the "job description" for angels is actually found in their name. The Hebrew word for angel is "malak"; and the Greek word for is "angelos". In both cases, Hebrew and Greek, the words mean "messenger". But they do much more than just deliver messages!

In fact, if we study angels in the Bible, we find:

### They are less than God/Jesus.

*This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. - Hebrews 12:4 (NLT)*

### They are created beings.

*Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all the armies of heaven! Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you twinkling stars! Praise him, skies above! Praise him, vapors high above the clouds! Let every created thing give praise to the LORD, for he issued his command, and they came into being. - Psalm 148:2-5 (NLT)*

### They are innumerable.

*No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. - Hebrews 12:22*

*Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. - Revelation 5:11 (NLT)*

### They are in God's presence.

*"Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father." - Matthew 18:10 (NLT)*

### They have individual wills. (They can choose to follow God or not.)

*And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment. - Jude 1:6 (NLT)*

### They listen for God's commands and carry out His plans.

*Praise the LORD, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. - Psalm 103:20 (NLT)*

### They are involved in a war we can't see.

*Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there*

*with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come.” - Daniel 10:12-14 (NLT)*

They minister (care for) humans.

*Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation. - Hebrews 1:14 (NLT)*

They are frightening in their true form.

*Just then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: - Luke 2:9-10 (NLT)*

*(Pretty much every time they appear to a human, they have to start by calming them down!)*

They can disguise themselves as humans.

*Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! - Hebrews 13:2 (NLT)*

Along with this, I usually get the following questions:

**1. Do I have a “guardian angel”?**

Usually people who believe we do point to:

*“Beware that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.” - Matthew 18:10 (NLT)*

Unfortunately, we’re not sure who the “little ones” are. It may apply to young Christians OR it may apply to small children. In either case, there is NEVER a time that the Bible specifically mentions that we each, individually, have our own guardian angel.

**2. Can I see angels?**

The answer to this is...sort of.

In certain times, angels show up and are visible.

Examples of this include: Lot is visited by angels (Genesis 19), Gideon is called to leadership by an angel (Gideon 6), Daniel is visited by an angel (Daniel 10), Jesus is cared for by angels (Matthew 4), Peter is set free by an angel (Acts 12), etc.

In other times, angels are invisible.

Examples of this include: Elisha sees angels but his servants do not (2 Kings 6), Daniel sees an angel but the men with him don’t (Daniel 10), Paul writes about beings we can’t see (Colossians 1), etc.

The key thing to notice is that for all the times in the Bible where people see angels, there are countless other times when people...don’t.

Angels are very real, very powerful beings. The one thing to be aware of, though, is that people who

want to be ministered to by angels, to receive a message from God from angels, tend to have their focus in the wrong place. Angels are good; God is great.

Instead of wanting a message from angels, we should read the Word of God. Instead of seeking angels to intervene in our weakness, we should seek God, instead.

There's a TON more we could talk about angels, so if you want more, ask!

### **Are all angels boys?**

Okay, this is actually an interesting question, so here we go:

1. First, the Hebrew word for angel, or “messenger”, is “malak” and the Greek word for angel is “angelos”. These are both masculine nouns. (That doesn't necessarily mean anything. For instance, in Spanish the word for book – “libro” – is a male noun.)
2. Second, when the Bible specifically uses the term “angel”, it always refers to a male being... (Hold that thought, though!)
3. Third, if you look at the appearances of angels, they resemble human males. (For some quick examples, see Genesis 18:2, Genesis 16, and Ezekiel 9:2.)
4. Fourth, the “named” angels in the Bible – Gabriel, Michael, and even Lucifer – all have masculine names.

So, at first glance, it DOES appear that all angels are “boys” (male). However, there ARE two things that are kind of...quirky.

In Zechariah 5:9, we find this:

*Then I looked up and saw two women flying toward us, gliding on the wind. They had wings like a stork, and they picked up the basket and flew into the sky. - Zechariah 5:9 (NLT)*

So you have women with wings described in this verse. Are these “angels”? The Bible uses the word for “women”, not angels. However they also have wings... (By the way, this is ignoring the discussion of whether or not angels HAVE wings!) We can't say definitively one way or another, then, if these are angels...or something else!

Also, there IS some confusion that comes from Matthew 22:30:

*For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. - Matthew 22:30 (NLT)*

A lot of people read this to mean that angels do NOT have a gender at all; however that's not what this actually says. All this verse says is, “angels do not marry”.

So, are all angels boys? At least the ones we clearly know of from the Bible...

**Can people actually see spirits, like spirits from a past life? If yes, can it mean something or send a message?**

There's some debate over this. For me, I believe the words in Hebrew 9:27:

*And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him. - Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT)*

Based on this, it seems to indicate that spirits can't come back!

But, the number one response I get to that is, "What about the 'Witch of Endor'? She saw spirits!" To find that story, go to 1 Samuel 28. The background of the story is that Saul, in a fight with the Philistines, does exactly what God told him NOT to do: he seeks out a spiritual medium to talk to the dead! (Not the brightest thing.) Starting in verse 11, it says:

*Finally, the woman said, "Well, whose spirit do you want me to call up?" "Call up Samuel," Saul replied. When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, "You've deceived me! You are Saul!" "Don't be afraid!" the king told her. "What do you see?" "I see a god coming up out of the earth," she said. - 1 Samuel 28:11-13 (NLT)*

The number one rule in illusions is to watch the expression on people's faces. I once saw an illusionist call a woman out of the audience, she named a "random" card, and the illusionist opened a box that had been sitting in full view the whole time and inside was ONLY her card! And she smiled...faintly. If it was me, I would have been screaming and freaking out. She smiled...faintly. Based on that, I can tell you she was probably in on the trick the whole time! It wasn't an accident that she was chosen; she was a "stooge" planted in the audience to name that one card!

The medium in 1 Samuel 28 is someone who calls up "dead people" and talks to them all the time, right? At least that's what she TELLS people! But, when the vision of Samuel actually shows up, what does she do? She freaks out! If this is "normal", she wouldn't be screaming!

So, what does it mean? It means she was a fraud! That's why God tells His people to stay away from fortune-tellers, witches, magic, mediums, and more! Because it's ALL fake! (There is no example of "real" magic described anywhere in the Bible!) Even in this case, it's not the "witch" who forces Samuel to come back; he comes back at God's will to deliver a message to Saul.

But that still leaves us with the question of what WAS Samuel? Was he a ghost? A vision? The Bible doesn't tell us. I think it's important to note that according to the Bible, Saul doesn't actually SEE Samuel – he does hear him – and he receives a message of doom for disobeying God! (Because Saul doesn't see him, I'd argue that Samuel's still not a "ghost" in the traditional sense.)

At other times, when people DO come back – like Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17) – they come back in a physical form, not as ghosts! They're there, bodily, from Heaven.

Can we see ghosts or spirits? The Bible seems to say that we can't.

However, I also think the universe is weirder than we can ever imagine! Quantum Physics says it may be possible to see into the past or into the future. At that point, we could see a vision, but it would be a natural phenomenon that we just don't understand. Just sayin'...

### **Did Adam and Eve have belly buttons?**

No. Can I prove this? No. However, belly buttons are the result of cutting the umbilical cord between the mother and a child. Since Adam and Eve didn't have mothers, there would be no reason for them to have a belly button, either.

### **Did Adam and Eve marry?**

In the conventional sense, no. There was no ceremony. Instead, they agreed to be husband and wife before God. In my opinion, that's all that's really needed, since they made a sincere promise before God and an equally sincere promise to each other. Today's wedding process is all designed around the humans; God's original design centered on Him.

### **Did God really turn the Nile River into blood?**

What a great question! So, let's dig into the Bible and see what it says:

*Then the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and raise your hand over the waters of Egypt—all its rivers, canals, ponds, and all the reservoirs. Turn all the water to blood. Everywhere in Egypt the water will turn to blood, even the water stored in wooden bowls and stone pots.'"*

*So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them. As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood! The fish in the river died, and the water became so foul that the Egyptians couldn't drink it. There was blood everywhere throughout the land of Egypt. But again the magicians of Egypt used their magic, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh's heart remained hard. - Exodus 7:19-22a (NLT)*

Okay, so according to the Bible, the river turned to blood. But if we read the next little bit and see what Pharaoh's magicians do, then we understand WHY it had to turn into blood! But first, let me give you some backstory:

The Nation of Israel is in slavery in Egypt. To escape Egypt, you have to defeat four groups: magicians, priests, "gods", and Pharaoh. God starts this battle by going gunning for the Egyptian magicians, using their own tricks against them! Oh, and we DO know that they were just magic tricks, not miracles. Why? Because we've found their "books" of magic tricks that explain how to do them!

To turn water into blood like the Egyptian magicians did, you start with a tiny, little bowl of water. Then, you take dried blood, palm it when nobody's looking, wave your hand over the tiny, little bowl of

water, and drop the blood-powder in. Then you take your finger, stir the bowl, and \*poof!\* instant blood...in a tiny, little bowl! (Sensing a theme here?)

God says, “That’s cute! Now, watch this!” Then He has Moses and Aaron turn EVERYTHING to blood! The problem is, the magicians can’t confess to Pharaoh that their tricks are just...tricks. If they admit they were lying to Pharaoh, they won’t live very much longer! They’re trapped by their own lies, and God is using that against them!

Now, if this seems strange, you have to know one other thing: the Bible is NOT the only place that mentions water turning to blood! There’s a document called “The Ipuwer Papyrus” that records the lamentations (crying) of an Egyptian official named Ipuwer. In the document, Ipuwer describes a series of plagues that hit Egypt, including:

*“Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere” (2:5–6). “The river is blood. . . . Men shrink from tasting—human beings, and thirst after water” (2:10). “That is our water! That is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is ruin” (3:10–13). (Ipuwer Papyrus)*

Seems like there is proof that the Nile River actually DID turn to blood!

### **Did Noah have fish and water animals on the ark?**

There are two main sections that we need to look at here. First we have:

*“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. - Genesis 6:17 (NLT)*

This verse says two important things. First, God is going to destroy everything that “breathes”. Technically, a fish doesn’t “breathe” like land animals do. Second, it mentions that the animals “on earth” (erets) will die. Quite literally, this is any animal on land, not in the water.

The next point is:

*All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. - Genesis 7:21-23a (NLT)*

This gives us a nice, long list of what drowned. Notice they’re all terrestrial – land-based – animals.

Because of that, Noah doesn’t have to bring fish and water animals onto the ark. Fish, because they aren’t affected by breathing water in a flood; aquatic animals because they live in the water and can swim, whereas land animals can’t.

### **Do Psalms count as verses in the Bible?**

I'm not 100% sure what's being asked here. For those of you who don't know, Psalms are simply "songs" written by various people (mostly King David). So, if I take the words of this question at face-value, then "yes", Psalms count as verses.

In fact, Jesus quotes from the Book of Psalms:

*Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"*

*They replied, "He is the son of David."*

*Jesus responded, "Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah 'my Lord'? For David said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.' Since David called the Messiah 'my Lord,' how can the Messiah be his son?" - Matthew 22:41-45 (NLT)*

The quote from David comes from Psalm 110:1. Jesus even goes further in Luke 24:44:

*Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." - Luke 24:44 (NLT)*

Based on this – and there's more I could point out in Acts and in other places – it would seem that they're every bit as good as the rest of the Bible. In closing, my opinion is that if it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me!

### **How did Adam and Eve's family procreate?**

This is actually a very important question! There are some weird answers out there, including races of subhumans, God creating additional people, etc. The easiest answer, though, is probably the correct one:

*After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. - Genesis 5:4 (NLT)*

We're told about Cain, Able, and Seth; we're not told about their sisters. Most likely, Cain and Seth would have married their sisters or their nieces. (If Seth married his sister and had a daughter, Cain could have married that daughter.)

You have to remember that, at this time, these humans are genetically very pure. For siblings to marry each other wouldn't result in the birth-defects it would cause nowadays. What do I mean?

Well, when I married Maria, my DNA was damaged. (I have asthma, wear glasses, am going bald, etc.) Maria's DNA was also damaged. (She wears glasses.) Because of that, our children inherited our damaged DNA regarding eyes – both of them wear glasses – but they didn't inherit my damaged DNA

that caused my asthma. Why? Because even though I could pass on that damage, they got Maria's DNA in that area and her DNA wasn't damaged!

But back in the time of Cain and Seth, there wasn't damage to their DNA, so they didn't have any unhealthy traits that could combine and be passed on to their children. Over time, though, humans began to pick up damage which was passed on to their children. Brothers and sisters would have the same damaged DNA, which means that if they married each other, their children were pretty much guaranteed to have severely damaged DNA. How could they avoid it since both brother and sister are carrying the same damage? When this became an issue, God banned the practice of brothers marrying their sisters.

(By the way, to all the geneticists and microbiologists out there, I apologize for a very simplistic view of heredity and DNA!)

### **How did Mary and Joseph feel when they received baby Jesus?**

I'm not really sure..? (Is that a good enough answer?) But, there are a couple of verses that we could look at:

*When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. - Luke 2:15-20 (NLT)*

When the shepherds visit, they talk about the angels singing and the message of the newborn Messiah. Mary hears what they're saying and we're told she "kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often".

The Greek word for "kept" or "treasured" is συντήρει (synetērei) which is a compound word: "sun" which means "with"; and "tereo" which means to "guard" or "keep intact". In other words, Mary is so amazed by everything that she guards it in her heart to make sure she will never forget it! (Also, that's why Luke, when he goes to interview Mary, gets the whole story of what happened!)

Beyond that, we're not told anything else and I prefer not to guess.

Oh, and thank you for asking a Christmas-related question!

### **How do we reach the 12 gates from earth's spherical surface in Revelation 21:16?**

The full question was...much longer. (I hope it's okay that I edited it.) The verse in question is:

*The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was*

*long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). - Revelation 21:15-17 (NLT)*

Sorry, read a little more than verse 16 to set the context. The next part is:

*There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. - Revelation 21:13-14, 21 (NLT)*

The question is: based on the curvature of the earth, how does this work? Essentially, due to the curvature of the earth, there is a height difference of 16 feet over 10 miles. For a building 1,400 miles wide, the height difference from one side of the foundation to the other would be 2,240 feet, or close to half-a-mile!

So, how does this work? And the answer is? We don't know for sure!

But notice that God lowers the new Jerusalem out of Heaven in verse 10. It doesn't say, "And God perched it on top of the earth where it balanced precariously, rocking back and forth over half-a-mile!"

I think it's safe to assume that if God is building it, then He puts a solid foundation under it. (God likes firm foundations!) Whether that elevates the city or the city sinks into the earth is actually unimportant. The key thing is that the city is seated firmly.

Now the next thing to note is that it doesn't say, "And the gates were stuck at the very bottom of the city walls!" Because of that, if the building is in the ground, the gates could be further up without causing any difficulty. If the city is built on a foundation, then the foundation can serve as a ramp. The key thing is that God will build the city to be...amazing.

Unfortunately, I can't answer anything more than that.

(Thankfully you didn't ask me to explain how each gate was made from a single pearl – where did they get oysters THAT big? Or how the street could be "pure as gold" but also "clear as glass"! Some things we're just going to have to wait and see!)

### **How does God make an ax head float in 2 Kings 6:6?**

Let's start by looking at the story:

*But as one of them was cutting a tree, his ax head fell into the river. "Oh, sir!" he cried. "It was a borrowed ax!"*

*"Where did it fall?" the man of God asked. When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at that spot. Then the ax head floated to the surface. "Grab it," Elisha said. And the man reached out and grabbed it. - 2 Kings 6:5-7 (NLT)*

All right, let me give you my most profound answer: I don't know.

I also don't know how God made the sun stand still (Joshua 10:13), how Jesus restored the man's hand (Matthew 12:13), or how Peter and John made a lame man walk (Acts 3:6). These are "miracles", or moments when God steps in and changes the "natural" way things work. If you think about it, though, they make sense: if God set the rules in place, He has the power to change them. (Provided it doesn't go against His nature.)

And just so you know, I don't have to understand how God does something like that. I'm just okay with the fact that He does...

### **How did Moses survive seeing God?**

I really don't know... The Bible doesn't tell us much about this. (I kind of like the fact that God is so complicated that I can't understand everything He does!)

### **How is it possible for a "whale" to swallow a man?**

The first thing we need to know about the story of Jonah is that the term "whale" does not appear. Instead, the term is "great fish", which gives us a few choices to work with, not just a whale.

Next, in 1891 a whaler by the name of James Bartley was reportedly swallowed by a whale. The ship gave chase, caught the whale the next day and pulled the man, unconscious, from his stomach. He had suffered oxygen-deprivation and was bleached white by the stomach acids, but he made a full recovery. (Skeptics debate the story, but that's the best one that I can give to you. Everyone else swallowed by a toothed-whale didn't make it...)

Also, in June 2021, a Massachusetts man named Michael Packard was swallowed by a humpback whale for about 30 seconds and he survived intact. Not quite three days, but it's proof that you can be swallowed by a whale and live.

Do I think it's possible? Well, if God can make the earth, flood it, cause the sun to remain in the sky, create eclipses, cover the earth in darkness, etc., being swallowed by a "great fish" takes very little faith in my world...

### **How many people followed Moses?**

This is one of those questions that make us Pastors cringe a bit! Why? Because the numbers we have don't really make sense!

In Numbers 1, the total number of fighting men was over 600,000; which means that the nation would probably have been over two million people in total! In those times, that would have meant that the Nation of Israel was almost the same size as Egypt, which was a superpower!

Now, while this IS possible, there are people who doubt that this number is correct. Why? Because if it's correct, it means that we don't really understand how many people lived in other nations at that time or how big their armies were!

To fix that issue, some people argue that we don't have the Hebrew words right. If you read the Hebrew with a slightly different meaning, it works out that Israel only had about 22,000 people! While this makes scholars feel better, it creates it's own set of problems.

As for me, I really don't have a problem with two million people, especially when you consider the plagues and punishments that the nation encountered before they came to the Promised Land.

Regardless of which is correct, the number of people who made the trip doesn't really matter. Why? Because they were a bunch of ex-slaves with limited fighting knowledge. If you have 10,000 trained soldiers against 100,000 clueless farmers, who wins? The soldiers! But in battle after battle, Israel wins. Why? Because they aren't fighting alone; God fights with them. Because of that, whether you have 20,000 people or two million, you're going to win!

### **If Adam and Eve didn't make the first sin, wouldn't someone else have?**

If you read 1 Peter 1:20 you find that God knew, before the world began, that Jesus would have to die for our sins. So, if not Adam and Eve, then someone else would have. We all have the ability to choose...

### **If God made the earth, why is it so small?**

Small compared to what? Sorry, that IS a legitimate question. If I compare the earth to myself, it's HUGE. (Yes, I AM getting bigger, but I'm nowhere near the size of the earth!) Most days, I struggle to understand how big the earth really is! However, that's not all that helpful, is it?

Let me put it this way: a long time ago, I was into theater. I performed on stage, but I also loved doing makeup, lighting, sound, and just about anything else. If you've ever performed, think about the size of the actual stage compared to the building it's in. It's SMALL! In one theater I worked in, you could literally fit at least 50 stages into that building alone! Even stranger, although the theater was built for the stage, the stage wasn't at the center of the building!

Why does this matter?

Because when you go to the theater, the eyes of everyone in the building – whether you're watching or working – are all focused on the drama that's taking place. The actors move into position, the lights dim, and everyone watches, waiting to see what will happen next.

God set the stage from before time began. In 1 Peter, we find:

*God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days. - 1 Peter 1:20 (NLT)*

God wrote the play, designed the background, and introduced the people in the story. Jesus moved to center stage as the rest of the universe took its place to watch the drama unfold. And then God called out, "Action!" and we watched the greatest love story ever written acted out.

We saw Jesus' humble beginnings. We watched Him gather people to listen. We heard Him share both His love – and, by extension, God's love – with the rest of the cast. We felt His compassion as He ran to those in need. We thrilled when we saw the miracles that He performed, better than any magician could ever hope to achieve. We wept when He cried for the people. We were horrified when He died. And then, when Jesus rose again, some in the audience stood and cheered!

Is the earth small? Maybe. But I would argue that you couldn't have picked a better stage anywhere else...

### **If Jesus died on Good Friday and rose again on Sunday, how was he in the grave for three full days?**

This is a question that I get a lot, and it comes down to a cultural misunderstanding. Jesus tells us:

*After they gathered again in Galilee, Jesus told them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.” And the disciples were filled with grief. - Matthew 17:22-23 (NLT)*

For us, when we read this, a day means “a day”. We’re talking about a literal 24-hour period of time; or at least the time when the Sun is up in the sky! So when we look at the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ, it doesn’t make sense! Jesus dies Friday afternoon and is out of the tomb at sunrise.

Does this mean Jesus lied to us? Nope. You see we read a day as a 24-hour period of time; the Jews in the first century didn’t share the same view, though. In the Jewish tradition, ANY part of the day was still the day.

When Jesus dies on Friday afternoon, they take Him off the cross and bury Him before sunset. According to Jewish understanding:

- Since Jesus is buried on Friday afternoon, that counts as the first day!
- Then, Jesus is in the tomb all day Saturday, which counts as the second day!
- Finally, Jesus rises at sunrise on Sunday, which counts as the third day!

But wait, since Jesus rises at sunrise, does that mean it should NOT count? Nope. Any part of the day is a day, remember? If the first rays of the sun come over the horizon and Jesus rises exactly one-half second later, that half-second counts as a day!

So the confusion comes from our understanding of what a “day” is compared to the Jewish understanding.

### **In Mark 14:51-52, there is a story about a young man running away without his clothes. Why is this detail so important that this was mentioned in the Bible?**

Overall answer? We don’t know. However, there are some theories:

First, this was a wealthy follower of Jesus who had snuck out to talk to Him. (The phrase that is translated as “linen cloth” implies a rich article of clothing.) When the people tried to grab him, he was in danger of being accused of being a disciple and, facing the same punishment as Jesus, he ran!

Second, and the one that I think is more likely, is that this is John Mark, the author, himself. The writing style, the fact that the story only appears in Mark, and the description points back to him. By including this story, we’re told that Mark stayed longer than the other disciples, only running away when he was in danger of being captured.

In either case, at the end, Jesus is abandoned by everyone who followed Him and He goes on to face the cross alone. All of this DOES fulfill a prophecy, though:

*On the way, Jesus told them, “Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, ‘God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ - Matthew 26:31 (NLT)*

Overall, it’s a bizarre piece of information and the best guesses we have for it are simply that: guesses!

### **In Revelation 11:1 it talks about measuring the temple of God. Will the temple be rebuilt before or after the tribulation?**

Wow! Here we are at the end of the Bible and in the end times. Revelation is a book that most people feel deals with the future of the human race and how it's all going to end. (There are some that think that it's already happened, but I have a hard time with some of their ideas...)

So, because we're dealing with the future, it's going to be mostly my opinion, based on my research. (On the bright side, we WILL find out if we just hold on long enough!)

Revelation 11 is a very good reason for believing that not everything in the Book of Revelation has happened yet. Revelation 11:1-12 says:

*Then I was given a measuring stick, and I was told, “Go and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and count the number of worshipers. But do not measure the outer courtyard, for it has been turned over to the nations. They will trample the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days.”*

*These two prophets are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire flashes from their mouths and consumes their enemies. This is how anyone who tries to harm them must die. They have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. And they have the power to turn the rivers and oceans into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.*

*When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will declare war against them, and he will conquer them and kill them. And their bodies*

*will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city that is figuratively called “Sodom” and “Egypt,” the city where their Lord was crucified. And for three and a half days, all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will stare at their bodies. No one will be allowed to bury them. All the people who belong to this world will gloat over them and give presents to each other to celebrate the death of the two prophets who had tormented them.*

*But after three and a half days, God breathed life into them, and they stood up! Terror struck all who were staring at them. Then a loud voice from heaven called to the two prophets, “Come up here!” And they rose to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched. - Revelation 11:1-12 (NLT)*

Now, I don't know about you, but I don't remember reading about two dead guys coming back to life. (I know about Jesus, but I think the newspapers might have missed this part if it's already happened!)

So, if this is the future, the temple will need to be rebuilt before all of this can take place. By the way, there are people who are supposedly working on the plans to build it! Don't know if that's a fact or not, but there have been rumors for many years and according to some sources the Jews have been in negotiations with the Islamic community since 2000 for the rebuilding of the temple.

Most people believe the temple will be rebuilt at the beginning of the tribulation period, as the Antichrist extends peace to Israel and then takes it away. (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) So, long story short, many experts think that this happens at the START of the tribulation period!

### **In the Bible, how come Mary Magdalene was possessed by a devil?**

This question is based on a description that comes from Luke:

*Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples. - Luke 8:1-3 (NLT)*

From this, we see that Jesus casts out seven demons from a woman named Mary. (By the way, “Magdalene” means that she was from the city of Magdala; it wasn't her last name!) Because of what Jesus did for her, she follows Him. In fact, she is present at the trial of Jesus, she watches Jesus be crucified, and she is one of the first people to see Jesus rise from the dead! Pretty cool, right?

But, while there is a lot that we DO know about Mary of Magdala, we actually don't know why she was possessed in the first place!

### **Is Santa Claus found in the Bible?**

This is a GREAT question, especially since people are banning Santa from public places because he's a "religious" symbol. But the question isn't "Is Santa a religious figure?"; it's "Is Santa a Biblical one?" and the answer to that is...no.

First of all, you have to know that a lot of Christmas traditions ARE found in the Bible. For example, we know that there was a Christmas Star (Matthew 2:1), Wise Men (Matthew 2:1), the little town of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:5-6), angels (Luke 2:8-14), shepherds (Luke 2:8, 15-20), giving gifts (Matthew 2:11), and even a reference to a stable of some sort (Luke 2:7).

Unfortunately, there's no mention of Santa Claus...

The myths around Santa Claus go all the way back to the early church. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, in a place called "Myra" - which is now part of modern-day Turkey - there was a very rich man who was a Christian and a leader in the early church. According to the stories, this man, Nicholas, went around giving gifts to the poor. He did this secretly, so people would be surprised when they found these gifts and not know where they came from. He wanted people to thank God for meeting their needs, rather than thanking him.

Unfortunately, despite all the good that Nicholas did as a Christian, his story doesn't end well. Simply because he was a Christian, Nicholas was exiled from Myra, imprisoned by the Roman Emperor Diocletian, and killed on December 6<sup>th</sup> in either 345 A.D. or 352 A.D. (There are two different years mentioned in the histories, so we're not sure what year is correct.)

In an ironic twist of fate, Nicholas gets the "win" in this story. Because of his generosity and his almost "magical" ability to sneak money to people in need, his legend began to grow. The Catholic Church decided to call him "Saint Nicholas" and people hundreds of years later are still talking about his service to the poor. As the story is retold, eventually he is said to have supernatural powers and his name becomes a part of our history.

On the other hand, Diocletian, by stomping out the Christians, was hoping that he could become a "god" whose name was remembered forever! Have you heard of "Diocletian" before? You might have heard the name, but I'm willing to bet that most of you know almost nothing about him.

So is Santa Claus Biblical? Nope. But the reason we have a tradition about Santa Claus is because a real Christian, who lived 300 years after Jesus, did what Jesus did - he helped the poor and those in need and he did it because he wanted people to be thankful to God.

### **Is the moon a distinct and its own separate light as described in Genesis 1?**

If you're reading this, this is in reference to Isaiah 13:10c, which says:

*For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. - Isaiah 13:10 (KJV)*

(Note: The reason I used the King James Version was because that was what was cited in the question.)

The easiest answer I can give you is from GotQuestions.org. (Yes, I occasionally cheat!) They say:

*Describing the moon as having light is a matter of semantics. The moon is a luminary, even if the light it brings to the night sky does not actually originate with itself. Saying that the moon is a light is an example of phenomenological language, which people use all the time. It is not improper to speak of the “sunrise,” even though the sun does not actually rise (rather, the earth rotates on its axis). In the same way, it is acceptable to designate the moon as a light source. That’s what it appears to be from our perspective. True, without the sun the moon could not function as a luminary, but Genesis 1 does not posit that it would. The two heavenly bodies were created together and described together...*

*The Bible’s description of the moon as the “lesser light” is not meant to classify the moon as a light source similar to the sun. The language is an accurate description of the comparative luminosity of the moon and the sun. The meaning is that moonlight as it reaches the earth is less bright than sunlight, a fact that we all acknowledge. (Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/moon-light.html>)*

So the Bible never makes the statement, “The moon has its own light!” In Genesis, it’s just talking about the fact that it’s the brightest thing in the night sky.

When it comes to Isaiah, let’s read it in the New Living Translation for an easier discussion:

*The heavens will be black above them; the stars will give no light. The sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will provide no light. - Isaiah 13:10 (NLT)*

On the Day of the Lord, which Isaiah is describing here, the entire world is about to be punished for their sins. The heavens will go dark, the sun won’t show up, and the moon won’t provide light. (Which makes sense if the sun is dark!)

Because of this, it’s not that the moon stops giving out light; it never “gave out” light to begin with! Instead, literally Isaiah is saying that the moon won’t show up in the night sky.

I hope that helps!

### **Is the pit in Revelations 20:3 really bottomless?**

Road trip to the near-end of the Bible:

*The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he must be released for a little while. - Revelation 20:3 (NLT)*

So, the question is: Is the “bottomless pit” truly “bottomless”? Actually, that’s not the question at all. The better question is: Is there a “bottomless pit” mentioned in Revelation 20:3?

In Greek, the word used here is: ἄβυσσος (abysson). Literally “abysson” means:

*ἄβυσσος (abysson)  
the abyss  
unfathomable depth  
the home of the dead and of evil spirits (Jewish concept)  
(Source: Strong's)*

In fact, in my other sources, the better word is “unbounded” or “measureless”. This means that it’s not necessarily “bottomless”, but rather that no one has ever managed to measure the depth of it.

If that’s the case, then it’s not “bottomless” and we don’t have to worry about where it would be located in Creation. Instead, it’s a deep pit that’s never been measured and could exist...anywhere. (If you think about it, many part of the ocean would qualify as “abysson” since we haven’t measured and explored them!)

### **Is the Rapture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ one event or two?**

Especially if you believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, they are two separate events. The timeline would be as follows:

- The Rapture occurs. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
- The Tribulation occurs. (Revelation 6-19)
- The Second Coming occurs. (Revelation 19:14)

In other words, the believers – both living and dead – are caught up into Heaven. At that point, the Antichrist rises to power, the tribulation happens, and there’s hell on earth. Then Jesus – and his followers – return to earth to bring judgment to the world.

(By the way, this is the pattern of the “Left Behind” series of books and movies. While I didn’t particularly enjoy their writing, they follow this pattern!)

### **In what language will we receive our new names in heaven? Revelation talks about us getting a new name. Will it be in English? Hebrew? Klingon?**

The verse referred to here is:

*“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it. - Revelation 2:17 (NLT)*

The problem is, we are NEVER told the language. What we’re told is that no one else is going to know or understand it EXCEPT for the person who receives it. If we take this 100% literally – and you can make arguments for why we shouldn’t – we can automatically rule out ALL earthly languages.

Why? Because if it was written in English, everyone who could read English would know what it said.

If it was written in Hebrew, Hebrew speakers would know. So this stone will have to be written in an unknown language, and each of us will be trained to read and understand our new name. (Again, if this is 100% literal.)

With all of this in mind, we can easily cross off English or Hebrew from your question. Klingon DOES still remain on the table, however...

### **Joshua 17:18. Is the mountain wood?**

This was actually a longer question that contained the verse. (I shortened it so that the Table of Contents wasn't really, really long!)

Okay, so let's look at Joshua 17:18 in the King James Version:

*But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong. - Joshua 17:18 (KJV)*

In this translation, it makes it sound like the mountain is made of wood!

So, what do we do with this? When in doubt, we go back to the original languages. Literally in Hebrew the verse says:

*But the mountain country shall be yours. Although wooded it [is] and you shall cut it down and shall be yours its farthest extent for you shall drive out the Canaanite though chariots iron they have though [and] strong are. - Joshua 17:18 (HEB)*

So the mountain country is COVERED in forests that they will cut down. This is a glitch in the translation and also a shift in English from 1611 to now.

I hope that helps!

### **Since God made angels to help Him, why did He give them the ability to defy Him?**

I sort-of / kind-of answered this in the question: **Angels. What are they and what do they do?** But there is more depth to look at, so we're going to answer this one, too! So let's look at the verse that I used previously:

*And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment. - Jude 1:6 (NLT)*

Why did God give angels the ability to defy Him? For the same reason that God gave Adam and Eve the ability to defy Him: free will. God doesn't make robots; He makes intelligent, reasoning, spiritual (and flesh) beings. These beings – angels and humans – can make a free choice.

In our case, I would argue that it's easier for humans to choose not to follow God because we aren't

before His throne. The angels who rebelled saw God in all of His glory and majesty and power and still chose to rebel. Why? Because they, like us, want to be the “god” of our own lives. We want our own way, not God’s.

## Two animals of every species came to Noah's Ark, so how did animals from other continents get here?

Um... I'm not sure..? The Bible doesn't really explain it, but there are some theories:

- Theory 1:* In one of the first theories I encountered, it described Pangaea – the belief that all of the continents were once joined. That made it very easy for all of the animals to walk over and join Noah. (The continents supposedly spread apart either during or after the Flood.)
- Theory 2:* In Genesis 10:25, we’re told, “Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means "division"), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups...” Some people read this to mean that during Peleg's lifetime – after the Flood – the continents drifted apart.
- Theory 3:* The continents were different shapes and sizes in the pre-Flood world. That way they could be linked by land-bridges..?
- Theory 4:* God is in control. Remember, He didn't need to have every single type of dog; He simply needed two of each kind; or, in other words, simply two dogs!

It's really hard to say for sure how it happened, because anything I can say is, at best, a guess. (Sorry!) but, if I had to choose one of these theories, I’d probably go with Theory 4. God only needed one pair of canines to be able to produce every type of canine. The other benefit to this theory is that it cuts down on the number of animals needed to be on the ark!

## Were there really 12 Disciples?

This one is fairly easy to know because the Bible gives us a list:

*Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (also called Peter) (fisherman), then Andrew (Peter’s brother) (fisherman), James (son of Zebedee) (fisherman), John (James’s brother) (fisherman), Philip (uncertain), Bartholomew (uncertain), Thomas (uncertain), Matthew (the tax collector) (tax collector – obviously), James (son of Alphaeus) (uncertain), Thaddaeus (uncertain), Simon (the zealot) (politics), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him) (banking?). - Matthew 10:2-4 (NLT)*

So, yep! There’s twelve!

Of those, Matthew wrote the Book of Matthew (it doesn’t say that, but it’s usually credited to him); John wrote John, 1/2/3 John, and Revelation; and Peter wrote 1/2 Peter. So, out of the 27 book in the New Testament, eight of them were written by the people who most closely followed Him!

## What about ghosts?

Ohmigosh! I am SO glad you asked this question! First of all, I have a HUGE collection of ghost stories! Second, I have watched many of the ghost investigator shows on television! Third, I have watched the movie “Ghost”! (Okay, scratch the third one; it wasn’t that great of a movie...)

Based on all this, what does the Bible say about ghosts? Not much, I’m afraid... The main verse dealing with ghosts is this one:

*“And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment...” - Hebrews 9:27 (NLT)*

What does this say about ghosts? Not much. It also doesn’t give “spooks” a ghost of a chance! (“Ghost!” Get it?) What it does say is that after people die, they stand before God at the judgment. It doesn’t say, “After you die you get to wander around and frighten people while wearing a sheet over your head!”

But what about the ghosts people see? That, I really don’t know. I’ve seen some spooky stuff, I’ve encountered weird situations, and I STILL have no explanation for them. Here are some ideas:

- The Bible DOES tell us that both angels and demons are real, and that they can move about and interact with humans. That may account for part of the sightings.
- We also know that humans sometimes mistake things, so that may be another part. (This is especially true if we’re already freaked out!)
- We also know that the weather and nature does some weird stuff. (I once saw a man standing next to a path in the forest at night. When I got closer, I could see that it was a twisted tree trunk partially hidden by fog. Still made my heart skip a beat!)
- The final one is that we simply don’t understand the universe in which we live. There are theories that say we can catch a glimpse of the past or the future. Are they true? We don’t know! There’s another theory that says certain rocks may have the ability to “record” events. Is it true? We don’t know! What we DO know is that the universe will always end up being stranger than we think.

Are there ghosts? If you mean the “spirits of dead people come back to haunt us”, then the Bible pretty much says “no”. If you mean “some weird, unexplained event”, then I think there is a good chance you saw something! [Insert creepy music here.]

## What about ghosts (Round 2)?

I thought about walking away, but I just couldn’t. Usually, when I mention that the Bible doesn’t allow room for ghosts, someone will point out The Witch of Endor! In 1 Samuel, King Saul’s world is falling apart. God has left him because of some bad choices, his armies are losing, and he wants someone to tell him it will all be all right. So who does he go to for comfort? He picks a dead guy – the prophet Samuel!

There’s only one problem with this: God has forbidden people to talk to “mediums”! In fact, God told King Saul to kill them all! Why? Because it CANNOT be done! (I’m thinking about doing a show to

“prove” to people that I can “talk to the dead”...and why it’s all a scam! Unlike people who claim to be “real mediums”, I won’t be doing it as I try to steal as much money from you as I can!)

So King Saul, the guy who was supposed to have killed them off because they spend their lives hurting other people for money, goes and finds one. Convenient, huh?

Here’s what happens when they meet:

*Finally, the woman said, “Well, whose spirit do you want me to call up?” “Call up Samuel,” Saul replied. When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, “You’ve deceived me! You are Saul!” “Don’t be afraid!” the king told her. “What do you see?” “I see a god coming up out of the earth,” she said. “What does he look like?” Saul asked. “He is an old man wrapped in a robe,” she replied. Saul realized it was Samuel, and he fell to the ground before him. – 1 Samuel 28:11-14 (NLT)*

Do you want to tell if a medium is fake or not? Look at their reaction when something really happens! The “witch” calls up Samuel, just like Saul asks. The problem is...Samuel actually shows up! Please note that this is NOT because of her power – we know this because she’s actually terrified that someone appeared! (Not the sort of reaction you would expect from a woman who supposedly does this every day!) Samuel’s speech in the verses that follow indicate that God is the one responsible for this vision, not the witch!

Is this an example of ghosts? Nope. Samuel is not “called up” by the “witch”, proving that she’s a fraud! God allows King Saul to have a vision, telling him that he was going to die. Not very good proof for the existence of ghosts...

### **What did Jesus write in the sand in John 8:3-6?**

This is a GREAT question! (I love it because it takes us from solid ground into conjecture, which is WAY more fun to play with!)

The first thing that you need to know is that the oldest manuscripts do NOT contain this story. Did it happen? We don’t know. The best we can do is discuss it with caution, as it may or may not be true. When we look at a passage like this or Mark 16:9-20, we can read it but we need to be careful to NOT build our theology on it! But that doesn’t mean we can’t have fun with it!

Okay, so here’s the set up! Jesus is hanging out when the religious leaders bring in a woman caught in adultery. Here’s the deal, though: it’s a trap! How do we know that? Because of their own words:

*“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” - John 8:4-5 (NLT)*

If she’s “caught in the act of adultery”, where’s the man? Last time I checked, it takes two to “adulter”. If this is a true story, then the Pharisees set this woman up! Why? Because they grab only the woman and they let the man go free! (Notice, by the way, that she doesn’t deny the charge to Jesus, so she likely WAS doing what she’s accused of.)

Then comes one of my favorite lines:

*They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. - John 8:6-8 (NLT)*

This lets the Pharisees know that Jesus knows that this is a setup. More importantly, Jesus knows that they’re willing to let this woman die to try to trap Him!

But the question is, “What did Jesus write?” Actually, that’s only part of the question that we should be asking. The other part is, “Why did the oldest leave first?” I think it has to do with what he was writing! The options that are possible include:

- Some of my theology friends think Jesus was writing the Law of Moses related to adultery, shaming the Pharisees because of their trap.
- Some people I’ve read think that Jesus was writing the woman’s name to remind the Pharisees that she was a human being, just like them.
- A professor of mine once proposed, “What if Jesus was writing a list of sins in the sand? A list that mentioned the sins of EVERY ONE of the Pharisees who were present. Because of that, they became ashamed, seeing their sins written in the sand for all of their fellow religious leaders to see. That’s why the oldest left first, because they had the most to lose!”

If it were up to me, I’d go for the last one. That seems totally in line with the way Jesus would deal with the Pharisees!

### **What is Genesis 6:4 talking about?**

The verse in question is this:

*In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times. - Genesis 6:4 (NLT)*

Short answer? We’re not really sure! (Probably not the most helpful, but there you are.) The reason for the glitch is because of the phrase “sons of God”. In Hebrew, this could mean: angels, fallen angels, people of the line of Seth (remember, Cain is cursed!), people who were priests, etc.

I DO have a problem with this just being humans having children with other humans. By the same token, you run into vast problems with it being spirit beings having children with humans. In the New Testament, Jesus says:

*For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. - Matthew 22:30 (NLT)*

So angels don’t marry and aren’t said to procreate (have babies). So, if they CAN, this is the ONLY

place where it's mentioned...and, again, the text is ambiguous.

Where it gets even more confusing is that the spies going into the Promised Land report seeing Nephilim. (Check out Number 13:31-33.) The problem here, though, is that there IS some debate over how to translate these verses, as well.

So, what are the Nephilites or Nephilim? Nobody knows for sure; although they probably weren't the giant rock monsters shown in the movie "Noah" with Russel Crowe. (Reasonably certain of that!)

The critical thought here, though, is that this whole passage is dealing with the sins that humans do and the judgment that comes of it.

### **What is God standing on in Exodus 24:10?**

This was a fun one! Again, it was written in King James, so let's start there:

*Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. - Exodus 24:9-11 (KJV)*

Honestly, it doesn't matter WHICH translation you use; it's still...weird. But we get a little clarity if we go back to the original Hebrew:

*And they saw the God of Israel and [there was] under His feet as it were a work of paved sapphire stone and it was like very the heavens in [its] clarity. - Exodus 24:10 (HEB)*

Did that help? Probably not. So where do we go to next? Well, let me share with you what one of my commentaries says:

*When the Scripture says that the seventy-four men "saw God", this doesn't mean they beheld God in His essential being, for this isn't possible. (John 1:18.) They saw some of God's glory and they probably saw the throne of God on the sapphire pavement (see Ezekiel 1:26), but the invisible God was hidden from them... (Source: The Wiersbe Bible Commentary OT)*

The writers of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, describe God's throne as being blue like sapphire or lapis lazuli. We see it in Exodus and again in Ezekiel.

So, what is it? It's a blue throne on a blue foundation. Unfortunately, if you're looking for more, I guess I'm not sure what else to tell you...

### **What is happening in Judges 19-21? (Again, another long question...)**

The story starts out with a Levite, a member of the priestly tribe, who has a concubine. Now a

concubine was allowed in Hebrew society, especially if your wife could not have children. According to the law, the children were recognized as legitimate, but they had no rights to an inheritance unless directed by their father. This particular concubine is unfaithful to this man and then runs back to her parent's house.

The Levite goes to get her and, on his way back, he stops in the town of Gibeah, a city of the Benjamites, where an old man warns them that the town square is unsafe and invites them to stay with him. During the night, some of the men show up and demand the Levite be sent out so they can rape him. Instead, he sends out the concubine who the men rape and kill.

The Levite then sends parts of her body to all the tribes of Israel and everyone comes together to decide what to do with Benjamites. Their decision? They're going to have a civil war!

The first day, before the battle, they inquire of the Lord to find out who should attack Benjamin first. Notice that they DO NOT ask, "Should we attack Benjamin?" The question is, "Which one of us gets to attack and kill our brothers?" God answers that Judah should go...and the Benjamites win!

The next day, they try again, but this time they ask God, "Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again?" Do you see the change in tone? Now they're questioning God IF they should fight. God tells them to try again, and again the Benjamites win!

Now, look at the final response:

*Then all the Israelites went up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the LORD and fasted until evening. They also brought burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. The Israelites went up seeking direction from the LORD. (In those days the Ark of the Covenant of God was in Bethel, and Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron was the priest.) The Israelites asked the LORD, "Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again, or should we stop?" - Judges 20:26-28b (NLT)*

Do you hear the final change in tone? They approach God and remember that He is God! They show remorse for their sins, they fast, and they make an offering to God. Then, when they're in the proper state of mind, they ask God if what they're doing should continue or stop. In other words, they ask, "God? Is this what you want us to be doing?"

When they approach God in the right frame-of-mind, recognizing that God is in charge, not them, then God gives them the victory over the tribe of Benjamin.

By the way, the story concludes with this verse:

*In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. - Judges 21:25 (NLT)*

This story is all about people ignoring God, not respecting His laws, making horrific choices, and paying the consequences for their sins. They did what they thought was right in their own eyes, and we're supposed to learn what NOT to do from their example!

## What is the “firmament” and “windows of Heaven”?

In Genesis, especially in the King James Version of the Bible, we find this description:

*And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. - Genesis 1:7 (KJV)*

Literally the word rendered “firmament” means “the vault of Heaven”. The easiest way to translate it into modern English is to simply call it “the sky”. In Hebrew, this not only included our atmosphere, but it also could include the place where the sun, moon, and stars reside.

The phrase “windows of Heaven” is a little trickier because it can mean “window” or “sluice”. Basically, though, it refers to a place where rain pours out of Heaven, usually in a destructive fashion. (By the way, most modern translations use the phrase “rain from Heaven” or “rain from the sky”.)

## What is the firmament in Genesis 1:6 and why didn't God call it good?

Okay, I've answered this before, but let's take a slightly different look at this:

All right! Let's do a road trip to the very beginning of the Bible. In the King James it says:

*And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. - Genesis 1:6 (KJV)*

“Firmament” is an Early Middle English word that is not really used today, which is where some of the confusion comes from here. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “firmament” literally means “the vault or arch of the sky”.

The Hebrew word here is רָקִיעַ (rā-qî-a') also literally refers to the “apparent visible arch of the sky”. In other words, when we look up, we see sky curving above us. Because of this, the NLT's rendering of the word as “a space between” is probably more easily understood.

Now I was also asked why the firmament isn't called “good” after God creates it. Because it's simply the **space** between the waters of the sky (“heavens”) and the water of the oceans (“earth”), it isn't inherently “good” or “bad”; it just is.

## What is the “rest” referred to in Zechariah 1:11b?

I love the fact that this question takes us to a book that most people don't study. Welcome to a minor prophet named Zechariah:

*And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. - Zechariah 1:11 (KJV)*

Notice again that this question comes about because of the use of the King James Version of the Bible. Am I saying that the King James Version of the Bible is “bad”? Far from it! But because of shifts in

our language over time, there ARE parts that are confusing to read!

The confusion disappears if we read it in just about any other translation:

*Then the other riders reported to the angel of the LORD, who was standing among the myrtle trees, “We have been patrolling the earth, and the whole earth is at peace.” - Zechariah 1:11 (NLT)*

*And they reported to the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, “We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.” - Zechariah 1:11 (NIV)*

Literally, the Hebrew word for “rest” means “peace, calm, pacified, still”. In this case, I think some of the other translations have a clearer meaning.

Again, please understand that I’m NOT picking on the King James Bible! But if you ever read something in ANY translation that you don’t understand, I would encourage you to check it against another translation or in a parallel Bible. Sometimes the different words that are chosen help us to make sense of the original intention of the authors!

### **What was the height of Goliath?**

In 1 Samuel 17:4, we’re told:

*Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was over nine feet tall! He wore a bronze helmet, and his bronze coat of mail weighed 125 pounds. He also wore bronze leg armor, and he carried a bronze javelin on his shoulder. The shaft of his spear was as heavy and thick as a weaver’s beam, tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds. His armor bearer walked ahead of him carrying a shield. - 1 Samuel 17:4-7 (NLT)*

How tall was Goliath? Over nine feet tall!

Now, we could probably stop there; however, there ARE a couple of quirks to this measurement.

First, the Hebrew says that Goliath was “six cubits and a span”. The problem with this is that a cubit is the measurement between your elbow and the tip of your finger; which means that this can vary from person-to-person. If the person who measured Goliath had a shorter arm, Goliath may only have clocked in at eight feet. “Only” eight feet tall! (Goliath the pipsqueak, right?)

Second, there ARE some manuscripts that say that Goliath was only “four cubits and a span”, which means he would have only been around 6’ 6” tall. (Bear in mind that these are LATER documents, so it’s probable that it’s a copying error, or maybe an issue with translating from one language to another.)

Whether Goliath was only a foot taller than David or over three-feet taller than David is pretty much not that important, though. What matters is that Goliath was huge, strong, heavily-armored, had lots of weapons, and was a trained killer! David was a scrawny shepherd boy with no armor and only a sling

for a weapon.

And, in the end, who won? God!

**What's going on in Exodus 4:24-26? (The person phrased it in a MUCH longer fashion!)**

Okay, so let's take a look at the passage:

*On the way to Egypt, at a place where Moses and his family had stopped for the night, the LORD confronted him and was about to kill him. But Moses' wife, Zipporah, took a flint knife and circumcised her son. She touched his feet with the foreskin and said, "Now you are a bridegroom of blood to me." (When she said "a bridegroom of blood," she was referring to the circumcision.) After that, the LORD left him alone. - Exodus 4:24-26 (NLT)*

So, God has just commissioned Moses to go to Pharaoh; and then when Moses goes, the Lord is getting ready to kill him! What is happening here?

Okay, so what you have to understand is that Moses had not circumcised his son, as God had commanded. God established circumcision as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants. Because Moses had neglected that, because he wasn't following the rules of the covenant, God threatened his life.

Now, many commentators think that Moses became ill and that was why Zipporah had to perform the circumcision. After she touched him to show that the circumcision was complete, then God healed him. We're really not sure about this part, but it does make sense as to why Moses wasn't the one who performed the task.

The next thing you need to be aware of here is that God didn't "try to kill Moses". Why? Because if God "tried", Moses would have been instantly, irrevocably dead. "Try" isn't really in God's lexicon. So this is clearly God giving Moses a chance to redeem himself, to fix the wrong. (God extends grace to Moses a lot in this story, by the way!)

Finally, there is that phrase "bridegroom of blood". Apparently Zipporah did NOT approve of circumcision, so after she accomplished the task, she looks at her husband and basically says, "You forced me to do this terrible thing to my son!"

So to sum up: (1) Moses had neglected to follow God's rules; (2) God punished him but gave him a chance for repentance and to correct the sin; and (3) Zipporah was grossed out and blamed Moses for the whole situation.

**When God told Solomon that He would give him whatever he asked for and Solomon said "wisdom", since God is all-knowing, why was He pleased?**

Okay, the verses in question are 1 Kings 3:5-10:

*That night the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!”*

*Solomon replied, “You showed faithful love to your servant my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued your faithful love to him today by giving him a son to sit on his throne. Now, O LORD my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn’t know his way around. And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted! Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?”*

*The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. - 1 Kings 3:5-10 (NLT)*

Okay, I have to admit, this IS one of the toughest questions I’ve ever been asked. Strangely enough, it’s not because it’s incredibly complex and tough to visualize – like the Trinity – but because, on the surface, it’s almost too easy. (If that’s possible.)

The first answer I have for you deals with God being “pleased”. The Hebrew word used here is “וַיִּטֵּב” (way-yaw-tab) which means “to be good, well, glad, or pleasing”. In other words, God approved of Solomon’s response. This is basically God saying, “Good job, Solomon! You got it right!” God **knew** that Solomon would get it right, but this is God confirming it for Solomon.

The second answer I have for you is more of a guess, but it IS an educated one. In talking with another Pastor, he reminded me that sometimes, when God did things in the Bible, it wasn’t necessarily for the people at the time. His view is that when we’re told that God is pleased, that message wasn’t for Solomon, it was for us. This way we, thousands of years later, can know what it takes to please God.

And, in this story, what pleases God? Thinking of others before ourselves, realizing that we don’t know it all, and turning to God for the answers we need. That message is as important for us today as it was in Solomon’s day.

### **When God created the world, why did He take six days?**

Great question! I don’t know that I’ve ever been asked it before! To find our answer, we need to look at Exodus 20:11:

*For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. - Exodus 20:11 (NLT)*

What God did in Creation was to set a pattern for humans. Each week is seven days long, right? We are to work, as God worked, for six of those days. On the seventh day, we are to rest, as God rested.

In other words, rather than just \*poof\* everything into existence – which He could have done – God gives us an object lesson for how we are to live our lives.

### Where is the original ark today?

Best answer: We don't know. If it was below the snowline in the mountains of Ararat, it probably decomposed due to the elements. If it's in the glaciers of ice on the mountains of Ararat, it's probably been destroyed by the movement of the ice. If it's still out there, we haven't found it yet.

Just so you know, there HAVE been a lot of people over the years who have claimed to find the ark. Strangely enough, none of them have managed to bring back credible pictures, samples, or even a beam or two. Also, when they go back to the location where they found the ark, mysteriously it's vanished!

There's a quote that I love from an atheist named Carl Sagan:

**“Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”**

If someone claims to find the ark but has nothing to actually show for it, they've made an extraordinary claim. Because of that, the burden is on them to provide the extraordinary evidence; otherwise be careful about rushing to believe them!

### Why did God appear to Moses in a burning bush and not in human form?

I actually spent a while considering how to answer this. After some research and debate, I decided to cheat. There's a great website called “Gotquestions.org” where you can ask questions about God and read through some very good answers.

One of the questions that someone asked is pretty much the same as this one here; and, after reading their answer, I'm not sure I could give you a better one. So, here it is (I did edit it to make it shorter):

*There are several reasons why God revealed Himself to Moses out of the burning bush. First, God reveals Himself as a fire in that it is an image of His holiness. All through the Bible, fire is used as a picture of the purifying and refining quality of God's holiness. This is further evidenced when God commands Moses to remove his sandals “for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Here God was emphasizing to Moses the gap between the divine and the human. God is transcendent in His holiness, so Moses was not allowed to come close to Him.*

*Second, God revealed Himself to Moses out of the burning bush as an image of His glory. Though this theophany [a visible appearance by God] was frightening (Exodus 3:6; Deuteronomy 4:24), its purpose was to manifest the sheer majesty of God and to stand as a visible reminder to Moses and his people during the dark times ahead. For it would be soon that God would manifest His holiness and glory to the entire nation of Israel. As Moses and the children of Israel soon learned, His glory is like a consuming fire, a pillar of fire that radiates light, a light so brilliant that no man can approach it (Exodus 24:17; 1 Timothy 6:16).*

*Then we see that God was also concerned for the suffering of His people Israel (Exodus 3:7-8). In fact, this was the first time God had ever called Israel “my people.” Under the oppressive bondage of Egypt, they had no hope but God, and they could do nothing*

*but cry out to Him. God heard them and was now going to meet their need by delivering them from their enslavement and suffering (Psalm 40:17; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8). Though God has revealed Himself as one who lives in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16), the burning bush symbolized His intent not to consume or destroy His people, but to be their savior, to lead them out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land.*

In other words, God chose a burning bush to symbolize His holiness, His power, and the fact that He is a Savior, not some “god” who isn’t present and doesn’t care about His people.

Could God have chosen some other example? Sure! But you do have to admit that a “burning bush” is certainly memorable, right?

### **Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of Jesus?**

Wow! I’ve been asked hundreds (thousands?) of questions over the years, but I don’t think I’ve ever been asked this! (I LOVE new questions!) The simple answer? We really don’t know! But we actually CAN make a guess, based on piecing together parts of the Bible. Are you ready to do some detective work?

In the Book of Galatians, we find these verses:

*But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. - Galatians 4:4-7 (NLT)*

Did you see that? God actually had a TIME chosen for when Jesus was going to be born! Why? We don’t actually know! According to one expert:

*That which was predetermined in the counsels of God as the right and proper time when the whole course of previous preparation both for Jew and Gentile was complete. Here we have a very clear expression of the conception of religion as progressive, divided into periods, and finding its culmination in Christianity. The phrase "fullness of the time" corresponds to "the time appointed of the father" in Galatians 4:2. (Ellicott's Commentary For English Readers)*

In other words, God had chosen, in advance, when Jesus was to be born. Even more than that, there were other prophecies that had to happen, too! Jesus had to be:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
- Called a Nazarene (from Nazareth) (Isaiah 11:1)
- The heir to King David’s throne (2 Samuel 7:12-13, Isaiah 9:7)

Jesus’ parents had to be from the line of King David. They had to be from Bethlehem and had to return

to Bethlehem for Jesus to be born there. The mother had to be a young woman. After Jesus was born, they had to move to Nazareth. (There are a TON more prophecies we could look at, but this is enough to get us going!)

Based on this, how many women do you suppose there were living in Israel at this time whose husbands were from Bethlehem, worked in Nazareth, and who were direct descendants of King David? Probably not so many, right?

Because of this, we can assume that Mary was chosen by God simply because she was the one person who met all of the requirements needed! (Kind of a cool thought that God set all of this up a few thousand years ahead of time, right?)

### **Why did the idea of God and Jesus show up in the time period it did?**

The concept of God has been around since the beginning. Even atheists will admit that there seems to be an innate need for people to worship something; and it's also true that every culture we know of has had their God or “gods”. So God didn't “show up”, He's always been there.

As for why Jesus came when He did, we aren't really told. We're told that:

*But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. - Galatians 4:4-5 (NLT)*

Why was it the “right time”? Because God looked down through time, saw our need, and sent His Son, Jesus, so that if we accepted Him He could adopt us as His Children!

### **Why in the Old Testament does life seem so expendable. We read in Numbers that a dude was stoned for picking up sticks on the wrong day. Why?**

The passage referred to here is Numbers 15:32-36:

*One day while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they discovered a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. The people who found him doing this took him before Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the community. They held him in custody because they did not know what to do with him. Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must be put to death! The whole community must stone him outside the camp.” So the whole community took the man outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. - Numbers 15:32-36 (NLT)*

So, why the harsh penalty? To do that, we need to go back and take a look at Exodus 35:

*Then Moses called together the whole community of Israel and told them, “These are the instructions the Lord has commanded you to follow. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day must be a Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day dedicated to the Lord. Anyone who works on that day must be put to death. You must not even light a fire in any of your homes on the Sabbath.” - Exodus 35:1-3*

(NLT)

Okay, so there are some things you need to know:

1. The Israelites were called to live to a different standard than the rest of the world.
2. You did NOT have to remain an Israelite – you could have left at any time. (There are people who DID stay behind when the nation moved on, who DID leave, etc.)
3. The laws were made known ahead of time, so that no one was without an excuse.
4. The punishments were also made known ahead of time, so that no one was without an excuse. (It doesn't matter how harsh the punishment was; they still KNEW what was going to happen if they did something wrong!)
5. This man KNOWINGLY violated the rules. (He basically sneaks outside the camp to do it!)

So, if I choose to do something, knowing that I'll be killed if I'm caught, and I do it anyhow, whose fault is it that I got killed? Also, does this mean that life is "expendable"...or that God is serious in the punishment of sin?

**Why wasn't slavery touched on at all in the Bible? The only parts he talks about it, from what I can read, he gives guidelines about how to keep slaves, and nothing about how it shouldn't be done in the first place.**

Um, not sure which version of the Bible you have, but slavery is all over the Bible! First, though, before we talk about it, we need to differentiate "modern" slavery from "Biblical" slavery. In the Bible, slavery came in two forms: optional and not-optional.

The "not-optional" option (confused yet?) came when one country conquered another. In those times, captives were either (a) tortured and then executed, or (b) forced into slavery. However, this isn't like the slavery you might think of. Although some slaves – such as those in Egypt – were treated harshly; this wasn't necessarily normal.

Daniel is a slave who becomes second-in-command of Persia; Nehemiah is a slave who serves King Artaxerxes directly; Esther is a slave who becomes Queen. Slaves could hold places of honor and even get their people restored to their ancestral homes.

In optional slavery, I could sell myself or even my whole family into slavery to pay a debt. In this type of slavery, my master had an OBLIGATION to take care of me! It was a legal contract, and the master could be penalized – up to and including canceling all of my debt! – if he abused me!

There were tons of rules:

*"If you buy a Hebrew slave, he may serve for no more than six years. Set him free in the seventh year, and he will owe you nothing for his freedom. If he was single when he became your slave, he shall leave single. But if he was married before he became a slave, then his wife must be freed with him. - Exodus 21:2-3 (NLT)*

*But the slave may declare, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I don't want to go free.' If he does this, his master must present him before God. Then his master must*

*take him to the door or doorpost and publicly pierce his ear with an awl. After that, the slave will serve his master for life. - Exodus 21:5-6 (NLT)*

In fact, just hang out in Exodus 21 for more info... Again, parts of this system of slavery were more like what we would consider “indentured servitude” as opposed to slavery.

In the New Testament, slavery changes again.

*For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you. - Galatians 3:26-29 (NLT)*

In other words, as Christians, we aren’t supposed to look at people as “slaves” or “free”; instead we treat EVERYONE as a brother or sister in Christ Jesus! You could also read the Book of Philemon in the Bible to see how Paul talks to a Christian slave-owner (Biblical slavery, not Southern slavery) whose slave has become a Christian!

In fact, it was verses like this that led William Wilberforce, a Christian, to challenge the institution of slavery in Europe. They led Abraham Lincoln to question slavery in our country. And, no matter what people say, it really WAS Christians who led the charge to abolish the Southern slave trade, just like it’s Christians who are leading the charge against slavery still.

(See <https://remedydrive.com/the-exodus-road> for more information.)

**Why would God command so many horrible things to be done? Whether it's rape, genocide, or plagues, God is supposed to be forgiving and just, yet constantly slaughters and directly causes so much suffering.**

Okay, I get this question a lot. Well, not all of it... You have to show me where in the Bible God commands and/or condones rape. (There is a lot of talk of rape, but it’s NEVER held up as a positive thing! In fact, those who are raped have rights and usually the rapist is killed!)

First, I have to tell you that genocide, to me, is actually kind of an ironic statement. People get mad at God for doing it – even though He is the Creator of life – and yet they approve of it when we humans do it.

For example, take a look at Planned Parenthood, founded by a racist who studied the techniques used by the Nazis, and who started “clinics” in the areas of minorities. This is genocide of “inferior species” masquerading as “women’s rights” and people are okay with it. I guess, in my opinion, either killing is wrong or it’s right. (I don’t like double-standards...) Sorry, that was a tangent! Anyhow...

Let’s take a look at the most common argument on genocide: the conquering of the Land of Canaan. So Moses and Israel are marching to take over the “Promised Land”. The only problem? It’s inhabited by city-states of people who aren’t very happy that God wants to kick them out...

When Israel first comes to the Promised Land, they (actually God) have destroyed the most powerful nation in the world: Egypt! Word has traveled ahead of them, and people are terrified at their coming! They get to the land, send in spies, and ten of the spies come back and say, “We can’t win! We’re a bunch of losers! We should go back!” And God kicks them out in the desert for 40 years until that generation dies off... (This is a HUGELY abbreviated version of this story, by the way!)

Finally, round two happens. Israel starts marching toward the Promised Land and some kings come out to kill them before they can get there. (Those “innocent” ones that Israel is accused of genocide-ing.) Unfortunately, the kings don’t bank on God getting involved, and so they lose.

Then, the Nation of Israel sends spies into the city of Jericho; the first city they would need to defeat if they were going to take the Promised Land. When they arrive, they hear this report:

*Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. “I know the Lord has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. - Joshua 2:9-11 (NLT)*

So, how are the “innocent people” in the land feeling? They’re terrified! Why? Because they KNOW that God has promised this land to Israel!

Now, let me give you a hypothetical situation:

If a crazy psychopath, one featured prominently on the local news, walked into your family’s house, pulled a gun, and said, “In one month’s time, if you’re still here, I’m going to kill all of you! This is my house!”

Being concerned citizens, you report it to the police; and they look at you and say, “You’re on your own! We aren’t messing with THAT guy!”

The next night, you hear that this guy killed another family exactly 30 days after making a similar threat. The next night after that, you hear the same report. And then, as the month’s end gets closer, you hear that he was seen in your state. The next night, he’s reported in your county. The next night, he was seen in your city. The night before your deadline, this killer was on your street, staring at your house and checking the ammo in his gun. Oh, and the police have all suddenly and spontaneously gone on vacation...

Let me ask you this: are you still there the next morning, or have you run away? If you’re smart and you know death is coming, you’ve run away as fast as you can!

In this case, the people in the land KNOW that Israel is coming; they KNOW Egypt was destroyed; they KNOW that the Amorite kings who attacked Israel were wiped out; they KNOW that God is fighting for them; and they know that if they stand their ground, they will die! When Israel shows up

to attack the city, who is still inside?

Not the families; they've fled for the hills...literally! Not the women and children, they've run to the next city in the hopes of finding safety! What you have left in the cities are the stubborn remnants! These are people who do ritual child-sacrifice, who torture their captives, who routinely rape women, who enslave others, and who are the hard-core fighters who want blood.

So, this is not exactly a "genocide", since many of the people have already fled. It's also not killing a bunch of "innocent" people. In fact, it's taking out a bunch of people who you probably didn't want to be hanging out with anyhow! And yes, God, the one who created them, is morally-right in saying, "Kill the ones who burn their children to death while worshiping false gods! Kill the ones who take delight in raping and torturing and killing others!"

We may not like it, but would you call the soldiers who fought the Nazis to free people from the concentration camps "monsters" for attacking the Germans? Probably not. But when God does it, we think He's bad..? Not sure why that makes sense, but I hear it a lot!

### **Why would God give the law of Moses if he was just going to say it was fulfilled a couple thousand years later? What was the point of having the law of Moses in the first place?**

Okay, we've kind of covered this in the questions, "If the Old Testament is relevant, why aren't the Old Testament laws relevant..?" First, we have to define what we mean by "The Law Of Moses". In the Old Testament, there are actually three sets of laws given to the Nation of Israel:

1. God's laws. These include the Ten Commandments, instructions on how we're supposed to treat each other, rules for dealing with orphans and widows, etc. I believe these laws are still in place today.
2. Civil laws. These were rules that Israel had to govern their affairs. This included the monarchy that came later.
3. Customs. This included things like wearing tassels on their clothing, dietary laws, etc.

The thing to note is that ONLY God's laws applied to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). In other words, I can eat all of the bacon I want, since I'm not Jewish! (Yay!) However, I'm still not allowed to kill, to commit adultery, to lie, etc.

Jesus even ratchets it up a notch when He said:

*"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. – Matthew 5:21-22 (NLT)*

*"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say,*

*anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. - Matthew 5:27-28 (NLT)*

So, parts of the Law are still in place, even to this day.

The important thing, though, is the PURPOSE of the Law, not the DETAILS of it:

*Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet." But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.*

*But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes. - Romans 7:7-13 (NLT)*

I could quote other verses, but this is a good start. What Paul is saying here is that God gave us the Law, and the Law is good! However, instead of saving us by keeping the Law – since none of us CAN keep the Law – it shows us that we've...failed. All of us...

The next purpose of the Law is to show us that sin has a consequence. How? Because of the sacrifices in the Old Testament. We picture a beautiful, ornate temple, right? But on days of sacrifice, it would have been filled with blood, gore, dead animals, flies, and stench! More than that, each sacrifice for sins was costly, showing that sin has a high price.

Then, God ties it all together:

*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. - Romans 5:6-11 (NLT)*

What we couldn't do, Jesus did! He came to earth, lived a perfect life, obeyed the Law, and never sinned. Because of that, He didn't have to die! Instead, Jesus CHOSE to die in our place! He paid the high price for our sins, and His sacrifice reconciled – or brought us back – into a relationship with God.

The Law still reminds us to this day of what we do wrong. But, if we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then we can KNOW that we're forgiven and set free from the price of sin!

Let me know if you have any other questions on this, though. It's a great question and I don't know that I've ever been asked it before!

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