

LORD OF ALL

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People suffer in this life. They suffer, and they are miserable. When one person has suffered at the hands another, he believes himself to have been wronged, and he wants justice. All agree that there is much suffering in the world. They disagree, however, on what to make of it. Charles Darwin, for one, found the matter perplexing, and no answer satisfied him. He wrote in a letter to Asa Gray:

With respect to the theological view of the question; this is always painful to me.— I am bewildered.— I had no intention to write atheistically. But I own that I cannot see, as plainly as others do, & as I shd wish to do, evidence of design & beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent & omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidæ* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe & especially the nature of man, & to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion at all satisfies me. (Charles Darwin, letter to Asa Gray, May 22, 1860)

Although Darwin was not satisfied with any of the answers to the problem of suffering, the New Atheists are satisfied with one, namely, that there is no problem. There is no problem, they say, because there is no good and evil, no right and wrong, and that because there is no God, and no judgment. They say that there is no meaning and no justice in this life, and neither is there any meaning or justice after death, because there is no life after death. Richard Dawkins is perhaps the most famous modern advocate for Darwinism. In particular, he argues for a Darwinian view of the world. In His book, *River out of Eden: A Darwinian Way of Life*, he writes:

In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. (Richard Dawkins, *River Out Of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*, page 132)

The Christian can appreciate Dawkins' intellectual honesty, even if his way of life is not consistent with his view of life. Yet, the Christian must pity him, for he has no meaning in this life, and no hope for meaning in the next. The Christian is not exempt from suffering and injustice. Yet, unlike the unbeliever, his life has meaning, and he has hope for justice in the life to come.

Sometime after Jesus's ascension into heaven, an angel appeared to one Cornelius, a devout Gentile convert to the true religion. The angel told Cornelius to send men to Joppa to find Simon Peter. So, Cornelius sent three men, and while they were on their journey, Saint Peter saw a vision. In the vision, he saw something like a sheet descend from heaven, and on the sheet were all kinds of animals, including those the Law of Moses forbade Jews eat. A voice commanded him to eat, but he refused. Twice more did the sheet descend, and twice more did the voice command the apostle to eat. Then the vision came to an end. Peter could not make sense of what he had seen, and as he pondered it, the men that Cornelius had sent arrived. The Spirit told Saint Peter to

go with the men, and not to doubt, because He had brought them to Peter. Saint Peter went with the men as the Spirit had commanded him, and he did so without doubting. Without the Spirit's reassurance, he would have doubted, for he would later tell Cornelius, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." (Acts 10:28) Saint Peter began to comprehend the meaning of the vision he had seen. There is no animal the eating of which is in itself sinful. The laws of clean and unclean animals were meant to separate Israel from the other nations. (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) This arrangement was only ever temporary, however. God abrogated the laws of clean and unclean animals, because he no longer wished to distinguish His people, Israel, from the other nations of the world. He wished for all nations to be His people. Saint Luke relates what Saint Peter told Cornelius and his household:

Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts 10:34-43)

God did not intend forever to limit His people to Jews and converts; He always intended to include all sorts of people. He never intended to possess only the nation of Israel and her proselytes; He always intended to possess all the nations. He promised Abraham, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) God did not choose the Jews as His people because they were special; rather, they were special because He chose them as His people. He told them, "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8) The Jews were not in themselves superior to, or inferior to, the other peoples of the world. They were more blessed, or more cursed, however, according to how they fulfilled, or violated, the terms of the covenant that God made with them. God is just, and would never bless a man simply because he is a Jew, nor curse a man simply because he is not. Saint Peter told Cornelius and his household that God is no respecter of persons. That is to say, God does not accept a man because of his nationality. God does not accept a man if he believes in Him, but does not do what is right; neither does He accept a man if he does what is right, but does not believe in Him. God is a fair and righteous judge, and He accepts man if he believes in Him, and does what is right, no matter his nation.

God sent a message to Israel, and that message was peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. When Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, and proclaimed to them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11) Then a great chorus of angels said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14), The angels alluded to the prophecy of Isaiah who said, "How beautiful upon the mountains

are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7) This prophet called the Christ the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) There is only one God, the Father, and He is God, not of Jews only, but of Gentiles also. There is only one Lord Jesus Christ, and He is Lord, not of Jews only, but of Gentiles also. (Romans 3:29; 1 Corinthians 8:6) He is the one that brings peace between all men and God. So, Saint Paul writes that, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” (2 Corinthians 5:19) Christ, by bringing an end to the Law of Moses, broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, so the two might be united under one God and one Lord. So, Saint Paul writes:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (Ephesians 2:14-17)

Jesus, throughout His ministry, proclaimed that the Gospel was for Gentiles, as well as for Jews. When He began His ministry in Nazareth of Galilee, the Jews rejected Him. He reminded them that, although there were in the days of Elijah the prophet many widows in Israel, the prophet went, not to them, but to a Gentile widow in Sidon; and, although there were in the days of Elisha the prophet many lepers in Israel, he told, not them, but Naaman the Syrian how to be cleansed. When the Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal His servant, Jesus remarked that He had not found such faith in Israel, and He said, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 8:11) Jesus brought His message of peace from the humble Nazareth of Galilee to the great Jerusalem and all of Judea. Near the end of His earthly ministry, after two Greeks said that they wished to see Him, He said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.” (John 12:32) Jesus preached, not that He is King of the Jews only, but that He is Lord of all, and that all men must answer to Him.

God declared Jesus Lord of all because He is the one perfectly righteous man. He loved God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His might, and He loved His neighbor as Himself. (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) He did good wherever He went, and God bore witness to Him by anointing Him with the Holy Spirit, and with power. By that power He was able to perform many might deeds, even healing those that were oppressed by the devil, like the woman whose body an evil spirit had caused to be bent over for eighteen years. (Luke 13:11) His miracles were signs to the people that God was with Him. As Nicodemus said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John 3:2) Saint Peter and the other apostles bore witness to the great things He had done. Yet, many Jews did not believe in Him, some even attributing His power to Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. When Jesus healed a man born blind, the Pharisees denounced both Jesus and the man he healed. The man said to them, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” They said to Him, “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?” (9:31-34) Finally, the Jews crucified Jesus. This was a great injustice. No greater injustice was ever committed, nor ever will be, and God did not overlook it. His Son did not deserve to die, so He raised Him from the dead. He did not raise Him secretly, never to be seen again. He raised Him to be seen, not by all people, but by His disciples, and the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to proclaim that His resurrection is proof that God has ordained Him the judge of all mankind.

That the dead will be raised was the belief of many Jews of Jesus's time, especially the Pharisees. The Psalms say, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me," and "*Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." (Psalm 49:15; 71:20) That the dead will be raised to judgment was the belief of many. The Psalms say of God, "Thou renderest to every man according to his work." (Psalm 62:12) The Book of Daniel says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) Moreover, the Jews expected an heir to David's throne, and they expected him to reign in righteousness forever. God made a covenant with David in which He said, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." (2 Samuel 7:12, 13) When Jesus told the people that He would die, they were perplexed, and said to Him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" (John 12:34) Only after Jesus rose from the dead did His followers understand that because he died and was raised, He would never die again, and would reign forever as David's heir. The Psalms say, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Psalm 16:10) Jesus's resurrection is proof that He is the heir to the throne of David, and the One who is worthy to judge mankind. Those who believe in Him have forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Saint Paul told the philosophers of Athens, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31)

God ordained that Jesus be the judge of the world, because He is the only man worthy to judge, and He is worthy because He is the Son of God, and the Son of David. God is the righteous judge, but he has conferred upon Jesus of Nazareth the right to judge. Jesus said, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:26-29) God does sometimes judge in this life, rewarding those who do good, and punishing those who do evil. Some, however, leave this world without the reward or the punishment they deserve. This appears to some to be unjust. However, Jesus will one day raise the dead, and He will judge all mankind, rewarding every man according to His works.

The unbeliever has no meaning in this life, and no hope for the next. He may be miserable in this life, but it will be far worse for him in the next. The Christian, however, has meaning in this life. He lives for the Lord Jesus Christ, the true King, who reigns in righteousness, who forgives the believer's sins, and makes him more like Himself. Moreover, the Christian has hope for the next life, when the true king and righteous judge will give every man what he deserves, and will make all things right.

Let us thank God that He is just, and raised Jesus from the dead. Let us thank God that He appointed Jesus the judge of the living and the dead. Let us believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins may be forgiven. Let us live for Him in this life. Let us hope for His return to judge the world in righteousness.

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Amen.*