

Guys,

Good job on the debate last night! You guys were really in fine form! I couldn't believe all the obscure and detailed points you brought up, one after the other! At one point it was kind of hard to keep up! As atheists, you obviously know your subject! (Incidentally, Leighton, hope you're feeling better.)

However, that said, I still think you made a number of mistakes. Some of the things you brought up (such as the alleged "contradictions" in the Bible that you brought up) surprised me, because I would have thought that two guys who are as obviously well-read as you are would have known that there are extremely plausible answers to pretty much every "contradiction" you brought up, and those answers have been around for a long time and pretty widely known. (I'm attaching two of them below.) Of course, there is always the possibility that you simply do not choose to accept the explanations that have been offered, no matter how reasonable they may be. But that's another kettle of fish, I suppose.

I wish we could have been made aware ahead of time about some of the many points you brought up, because we got pretty far afield from the original subjects we started out with a number of times, and a lot of them involved extremely complex subjects -- things that demanded answers that were kind of difficult to pull off the top of your head at a moment's notice on the air. I don't know about Keith, but I never considered myself to be a "walking encyclopedia", with every nuance of every possible critique of the Bible memorized in my head and available to pull up at a moment's notice. As I said once before, I consider myself a researcher and a writer, because those are special abilities I seem to have -- but I am not particularly good at public speaking. Thus, when I don't have an immediate and articulate vocal answer to something (a position I admittedly found myself in a few times during the debate last night!), that doesn't necessarily mean

a good answer doesn't exist -- it just points to my personal inability to pull one up and immediately communicate it clearly.

Here's a challenge I can submit to you: I'll bet that almost any so-called Biblical "contradiction" you can come up with in writing, I can come up with a reasonable explanation for it. Try me!

Here's the answers to two of the "contradictions" you brought up last night:

The Genealogies of Matthew and Luke

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.

One of the charges of contradiction brought by skeptics against the Bible is the surface appearance of contradiction between Matthew's genealogical list (1:1-17) and the one provided by Luke (3:23-38). As is always the case, the charge of contradiction is premature and reflects an immature appraisal of the extant evidence. In every case of alleged contradiction, further investigation has yielded additional evidence that exonerates the Bible and further verifies its inerrancy. The alleged discrepancies pertaining to Matthew and Luke's genealogies were explained and answered long ago (e.g., Haley, 1977, pp. 325-326; McGarvey, 1910, pp. 344-346; McGarvey, 1974, pp. 51-55; cf. Lyons, 2003).

First, Matthew reported the lineage of Christ only back to Abraham; Luke traced it all the way back to Adam. Second, Matthew used the expression "begat;" Luke used the expression "son of," which results in his list being a complete reversal of Matthew's. Third, the two genealogical lines parallel each other from Abraham to David. Fourth, beginning with David, Matthew traced the **paternal** line of descent through Solomon; Luke traced the **maternal** line through Solomon's brother, Nathan.

A fifth factor that must be recognized is that the two lines (paternal and maternal) link together in the intermarriage of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel. But the linkage separates again in the two sons of Zerubbabel—Rhesa and Abiud. Sixth, the two lines come together once again for a final time in the marriage of Joseph and Mary. Joseph

was the end of the **paternal** line, while Mary was the last of the **maternal** line as the daughter of Heli.

The reason Joseph is said to be the “son” of Heli (Mary’s father) brings forth a seventh consideration: the Jewish use of “son.” Hebrews used the word in at least five distinct senses: (1) in the sense used today of a one-generation offspring; (2) in the sense of a descendant, whether a grandson or a more remote descendant many generations previous, e.g., Matthew 1:1; 21:9; 22:42 (“begat” had this same flexibility in application); (3) as a son-in-law (the Jews had no word to express this concept and so just used “son”—e.g., 1 Samuel 24:16; 26:17); (4) in accordance with the Levirate marriage law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; cf. Matthew 22:24-26), a deceased man would have a son through a surrogate father who legally married the deceased man’s widow (e.g., Ruth 2:20; 3:9,12; 4:3-5); and (5) in the sense of a step-son who took on the legal status of his step-father—the relationship sustained by Jesus to Joseph (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 6:42).

Notice carefully that Joseph was a direct-line, blood descendant of David and, therefore, of David’s throne. Here is the precise purpose of Matthew’s genealogy: it demonstrated Jesus’ **legal** right to inherit the throne of David—a necessary prerequisite to authenticating His Messianic claim. However, an equally critical credential was His **blood**/physical descent from David—a point that could not be established through Joseph since “after His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child **of the Holy Spirit**” (Matthew 1:18, emp. added). This feature of Christ’s Messiahship was established through His mother Mary, who was also a blood descendant of David (Luke 1:30-32). Both the blood of David and the throne of David were necessary variables to qualify and authenticate Jesus as the Messiah.

Once again, the Bible’s intricate complexities shine forth to dispel the critic’s accusations, while simultaneously demonstrating its own infallible representations. The more one delves into its intricacies and plummets its intriguing depths, the more one is driven to the inescapable conclusion that the Bible is, indeed, the Book of books—the inspired Word of God.

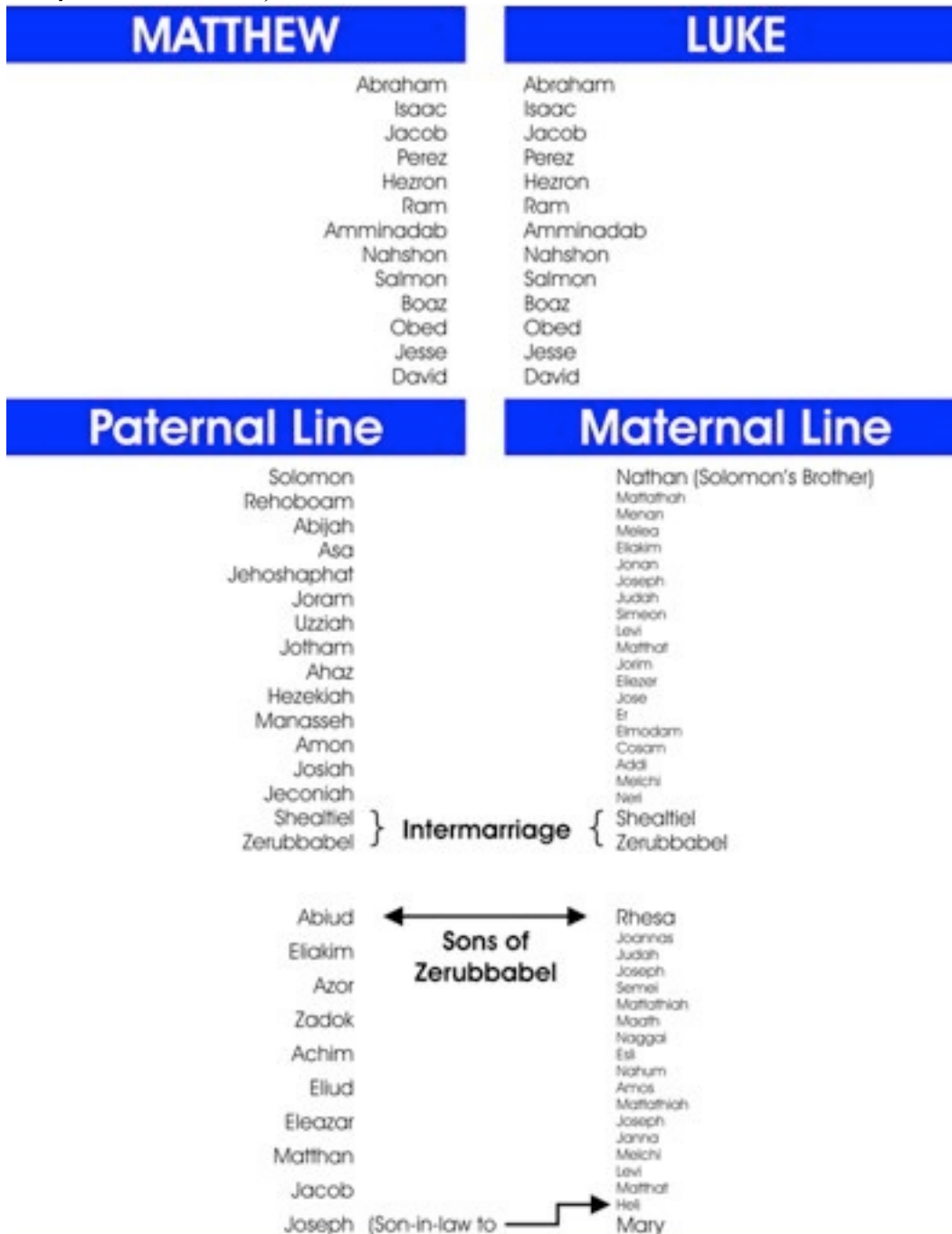
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Was Jesus' Tomb Open or Closed?

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

According to Mark, Luke, and John, by the time Mary Magdalene and the other women reached the sepulcher of Jesus on the first day of the week after Christ's crucifixion, the great stone covering the entrance to His tomb already had rolled away (16:4; 24:2; 20:1). Matthew, on the other hand, mentions the rolling away of the stone **after** writing that the women "came to see the tomb." In fact, at first glance it seems that Matthew 28:1-6 indicates several significant things took place in the presence of the women.

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

How is this passage explained in light of the fact that the other gospel writers clearly affirmed that the great stone blocking the entrance to the tomb had rolled away **before** the women arrived?

The explanation to this "problem" is that the events recorded in Matthew 28:1-6 were not written chronologically. Matthew did not intend for his readers to conclude from this section of Scripture that the women actually saw the stone roll away from the door of Jesus' sepulcher. On the contrary, verse 6 implies "Christ was already risen; and therefore the earthquake and its accompaniments must have taken place at an earlier point of time, to which the sacred writer returns back in his narration" (Robinson, 1993, p. 17). Verses 2-4 serve more as a footnote to the reader (explaining events that took place prior to the women's arrival), and are in no way an indication that Matthew believed the women arrived at the tomb while it still was closed.

The simple fact is, Bible writers did not always record information in a strictly chronological sequence. The first book of the Bible contains several examples where events are recorded more topically than chronologically. Genesis 2:5-25 does not pick up where Genesis 1 left off, rather it provides more detailed information about some of the events mentioned in chapter one. Some of the things recorded in Genesis 10 occurred after the incident involving the tower of Babel (recorded in chapter 11). And a number of the events in Genesis 38 involving Judah and Tamar occurred while the things recorded in chapters 39ff. took place. Similar to a teacher who is telling her class a story, and inserts information into it about something the main character did in the past or will do in the future, Bible writers occasionally “jump” ahead of themselves by inserting pertinent parenthetical material.

As a person studies the narrative technique of Matthew (and other Bible writers), he quickly realizes that the writer of first gospel sometimes arranged his account in **topical** order rather than in a strictly **chronological** order. Matthew 28:1-6 is just one example.

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... I also checked out the webpage for the Associates for Biblical Research. Can you tell me again what problem you have with them, and why you seem to want to automatically discount everything they say? I don't see anything wrong with them; they seem like a bunch of professionals who basically know what they're doing. Is your problem with them possibly that you consider them "biased" in their archaeology work because they accept the Bible as God's Word and inerrant up front? But if that's so -- then shouldn't Keith and I discount everything you guys say, because your research is "biased" based on the fact that you are atheists, and everything you do and say is an attempt to push that particular point of view?

I guess you have the same problem with Bryant Wood (who I never heard of until you brought him up last night) -- he apparently also believes in the inerrancy of the Bible, and I gather that, in your book, that makes him incapable of coming up with any legitimate information? But, according to that logic, we would have to throw out almost ALL research on ANY subject, because most researchers already have some kind of point of view in mind when they begin their research. But shouldn't researched information stand or fall on its own merits, regardless of what the predispositions of the researcher might be?

I like you guys. I really do! You're sharp, you're intelligent, and you're obviously very capable individuals. Certainly no sloppy research or phony "facts" are ever going to get by you! (I learned that just by forwarding a couple of bad e-mails to you!) I can appreciate that. You've done a heck of a lot of work to back up what you say you believe in, and even though I disagree with your conclusion (that God does not exist), I can still appreciate the diligence with which you defend what you believe. Most people are too shallow to do that, and don't bother to try to figure out why they believe what they believe. You do. I actually admire you for that.

I hope we will continue to talk/debate/discuss stuff in the future, one way or another!

It's certainly a darn good way to keep me on my toes about what I believe!!

Sincerely,
Kirk Hastings

Kirk,

You claim to be a researcher and yet in the debate last night you quoted William Albright and seemed quite stunned when I pointed out the man died more than forty years ago. Top this with the fact that although there have been shows done on the historicity of the Exodus and other such fables, neither of you recognized or were able to point out where you were getting your information from nor were you abreast of who you were listening to; a man who although quite conclusively proven wrong still clings to his delusions because the bible tells him so. Despite all of this, you flail about and find something fitting your parameters and place it before us as conclusive "proof" and "research"? Thank you, but last night was showing enough.

You claim again and again to be a poor orator, however, you have written books on your religion and are currently sharing a chair on a religious show with someone who has a masters in apologetics. According to the Evidence 4 Faith bio page Keith has been studying apologetics since he was 18. Compare that to Charley and I who have only really been studying religion since beginning our show two years ago. As far as the decks are concerned, the cards were stacked overwhelmingly in your favor.

Your claim that we went far abreast of the topic would be comical if it wasn't so transparent, but let me elucidate so you have no corner to run to. First off, we warned you we would be taking the gloves off on this one. We told you the topic of the show was going to be, "Given the existence of God, why would your religion be the one which should be followed as the true religion." We gave you months instead of the single night which was offered us to put together a defense. Nevertheless, this is a wide ranging topic wherein you all could have gone a thousand different ways, but instead you chose to claim it was true because of eyewitness accounts and was historical. Thus, we attacked your claims and quite easily proved your knowledge of such is shaky at best. Hell, even at the end where I quoted the scripture in Deuteronomy neither you nor Keith saw anything wrong with it, one of you even pointing out it was right to make the rapist pay silver, until I pointed out the woman was going to be raped for the rest of her life.

Last night proved one thing, we overestimated your knowledge and ability to speak on your own religion. Due to this, I am rescinding my offer to have you come onto the show and discuss your book. It would be much like placing a child in the middle of a Kodiak's den and waiting for God to come down and save him.

We would like to thank you two for coming on, but from this point forward have no interest in further debate with you. It is far too clear to us that we have to educate you on what your position is before telling you why it's wrong and even then these concepts are far beyond your capability to understand. Point in case your

complete lack of understanding concerning the difference between color and the frequency of light. Further debate with all of you has no value to us. Our fans will quickly grow tired of the awkward pauses and fumbling answers coming from their speakers.

I would offer a small bit of advice for the next time you face a debate; read your bible. I'm not talking about all the flowery, pretty stories used to gloss over the parts which make little sense. I'm suggesting you actually read the book you have followed for your entire life without your rose colored glasses on. Once you discover the inanity of god accepting an offering of golden hemorrhoids, of Moses's wife cutting off the foreskin of her son with a rock and flinging it at God, etc., etc., etc., you'll have a better time of defending it. Take a look at the other side and for once in your goddamn life actually question the stories you're expected to believe without question. Once you do that you'll stand a chance in a frank and honest discussion. Look at both your side and the opposition's otherwise you'll find yourself as unprepared as you did last night.

Once again, thank you for coming on and pass our gratitude on to Keith and Mike (Yes, I did have to look up his name on the bio page.), however, once these shows are posted we would ask you to take us off your mailing lists. Your research methods have already been called into question and we will not be placing any time towards what you send. You literally have nothing of value to offer us and even if you did we would disregard it because you have already proven your poor research methods to us.

Thank you for your time, but I fear this is where we part ways. You're a nice enough fella, but you would be ripped apart piece by piece were you to remain in our circles. Feel free to post as you please to our forum wherein our fans will gladly wrestle with whatever information you've gleaned and, as a show of good faith, I'll post this information to the forum to get you started and to let our fans know to expect you.

Leighton.

Leighton,

As always, thanks for your usual candor!

I could argue the accuracy of some of the things you said in your e-mail, but I guess you're right, you really don't seem to have any interest in hearing my point of view, or giving any credence to it,

no matter what I say. I don't know exactly what you keep getting so angry about, but I guess that's who you are. No problem; I can accept that. Not everyone has to be sweetness and roses all the time. I'm not either.

I guess I'll take the statement you made that "I'm a nice enough fella", and feel lucky that I at least got that from you!

I really do wish you and Chuck well, and I'll take the part of your advice I feel I can use (the part about reading the Bible more and making sure I understand what I believe, and why I believe it, as well as I possibly can), and just "chuck" (no pun intended) the rest.

I won't write you again. I don't think I'll be writing in to your website, either, because I get the distinct impression that most of your contributors are angry and belligerent all the time too, and I sincerely doubt that I would accomplish anything by writing in except to aggravate myself, and them. So there's probably no point. Thanks for the invitation though.

I'd say "God bless" here, but I guess that's not real appropriate, is it??

Kirk

Once again Kirk has reached out with an olive branch, only to be kicked in the balls by Leighton.

Chuck

How's this for a kick in the nuts; did Jesus come to preach to those already converted or to the slums of the world? Guess you can't expect modern Christians to have spine enough to sit at their computers, miles away from any danger beyond a paper cut, and display their beliefs in a forum where the holy might get questioned. Nah, modern Christians prefer to sit among their own circles plugging their ears and secretly hoping the end of the world will come before they're forced to actually question the flaws in their beliefs. Bring on May

21st! On May 22nd every free-thinker in the world is going to laugh as one more silly prediction and belief slips into water and drowns, but believers don't have to worry because their ears are wide open to receive the excuses as to why the second coming and the end of the world didn't come.

I don't recall being angry this morning. In fact, I was merely slipping on my shoes to go for my morning run. What you confuse as anger is something which is lacking in Christians. It's known as the truth and can be difficult to spot in theistic speech patterns and behaviors, but most atheists are irritated by the lies and omissions force fed to them and thus determine the truth is the only thing which has any semblance of power in it. You have something to fear and find offense at, Kirk, but it most certainly isn't me. It's hard facts and truth. By themselves they aren't that threatening to religion, however, information is vastly spreading to the fingertips of every man, woman, and child on the planet. Last night was a taste of what is going to befall your precious Christianity. Our interest in religion only really occurred in the last couple years whereas Keith has been training himself since he was eighteen. Even you realize how poorly you came across and I know this because you guys didn't close the Skype chat window before starting to talk. You have just witnessed what atheism is and the fact that we know more about even your own scriptures I'm sure leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

Yes, Kirk, run away. You wouldn't want your beliefs and false claims corrected by a community of a couple hundred who see you as little more than an ant running around in circles. It's far better to continue the way of the fool by listening to those you have been and then finding your beloved information inept in front of a worldwide audience. And that, my little ant, is little more than truth spilt with a smile. Shoo.

Leighton.

Leighton, if we ever do debate again, I am switching sides and debating with the E4F guys, who are not complete douchebags like yourself.

Chuck

As silence is the answer when you're unfamiliar with the subject matter, it would just be you and I talking. How is that any different from a normal week?

Leighton.

Okay, Leighton, as you said, I guess it's time to take the gloves off. I tried to be decent and polite and fair-minded with you, but

you won't allow it. Fine. You want the truth, I'm going to give you the truth.

It's not me who's the coward here, Leighton -- it's you. You are a self-absorbed, vicious mad dog that actually enjoys insulting other people and making other people miserable. But one of these days you are going to reap exactly what you are sowing. And you are sowing hatred, viciousness, spite, mercilessness, narrow-mindedness, and intolerance. You are a perfect poster boy for what atheism does to people: it tends to make them mean, pathetic, intolerant, and small-minded, just as you are. But here's the ironic thing -- your rotten, hate-filled attitude is probably driving more people away from atheism than toward it, because as such you are a perfect example of how atheism corrupts and perverts and cheapens people. People like you strengthen my belief in God, not weaken it, because it's people like you that prove to me that the devil really does exist. Your hatred of God and everything decent and good represents everything the Bible says the devil is supposed to be.

I feel really sorry for you. You are on your way straight to hell, and you are determined to drag as many people down there with you as you can. And let's face it, that is the only purpose of your podcasts and your website -- to take hope, faith and meaning away from as many people as you can, and drag them down with you into the bitter, dark pit that you have personally chosen to live in. You are headed for a really bad end, pal, and when it finally arrives I guarantee it won't be pretty.

You think you're so tough, Leighton, but I promise you you are not. Truly strong people don't have the need to be as vicious and profane and heartless as you are; they are above all that. You are not fooling me; you are actually one of the weakest people I have ever encountered. Why? Because you have given in to just about every base, easy, cheap feeling that people can have. Take my

advice and wise up while you still can. God will not put up with you forever.

Chuck, I sense that there is some decency and conscience still left in you. I heartily advise you to dump this "partner" of yours and get out of the pit that Leighton is in before it's too late and you find you can't get out of it. He is in the process of destroying himself, and if you hang around with him long enough he will destroy you too. Mark my words.

I don't fear you, Leighton, or people like you. I pity you. And I will not talk or debate with you any more, because I fully realize now that you are far beyond any kind of reason or decency or fairness. The Bible warns "Do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:6) That's a perfect description of you.

You are truly lost, in the strictest sense of the word.

Kirk

Would you look at that. I believe a nerve has been hit and suddenly this little kitten tries to pull out the claws. If that's the best you've got then maybe you should stay away from our forum after all. Your poorly presented arguments would get shredded due to your lack of understanding concerning your own religion.

Let's take a look at this, pussy cat. I typed into Google the phrase "Why would God cast someone into hell" and the first thing to pop up was on Yahoo Answers. I read through the responses and what I'm getting is this; if you're a murderer, rapist, child abuser, an addict, non-believer, or an evil person you're cast into Hell. Fire, torture, pain, and punishment for eternity. Forever. And, you agree with all of this as is evident by your response and subsequent cursing me to Hell.

Now, someone who can think two steps beyond what's told to them would look at that list and think it's more than a little unbalanced. Take a look at the drug addict, someone who may be a good person deep down but has addictions they cannot control, and compare that with an evil person, someone who intentionally harms and destroys. Generalizations are always a little over your head so let's look at

my sister who was raped in her teenage years, looked to drugs to escape the pain, and due to her drug habit hasn't exactly had a Cinderella lifestyle. Now, let's look at Hitler(As ALL Christians look to him) and how he, whether he believed in Christianity or not, used religion to punish the Jews and kill millions. You have a man who killed men, women, and children without mercy and then you have my sister who screwed her life up with drugs. Both are going to Hell to burn for an eternity in endless anguish. Does believing that get you off because that seems just a little disproportionate to me.

Oh, but wait, what was I thinking? We're talking about atheists. The wicked, wicked non-believers who have been fooled into believing all of the evidence God planted here to test men's faith. Yes, those nasty mother's and father's who take their children to little league practice but not to church are truly worth contempt and hellfire. They have a special place in Hell right next to the Hitlers, Stalins, and Castros. Maybe it's just me going to hell because I hurt your poor little feelings by speaking the truth. Despite the fact that I'm an educated man, loves my family, and takes my godson out for adventures, I do enjoy carousing and fighting. There's really nothing like the crunch of bone vibrating against your fist. Yep, I like to have me a good time and because of that I'm going to burn in hell alongside the worst mass murderers in history because I acknowledge the flaws in religion and its historicity. Those are crimes worthy of torture for an eternity.

Listen here, kitten, if God did exist he's a tyrant. You either believe in me or you go to hell. None of us would stand by and do nothing if a king set himself up and began to torture and kill the people of that land simply because they refuse to believe he is the God he claims himself to be. Tyrants shouldn't be cowered in front of, they should be put down like ailing animals.

I rather love being accused of being narrow-minded and intolerant because you're absolutely right on all accounts. I am completely and utterly filled with prejudice against religion. I despise every lie, omission, and half-truth it spouts. Let me ask you something, when all of you over there at the Evidence 4 Faith show are praising all of the good things Christians have done in the past (Abolishing slavery, equal rights, women's suffrage, interracial marriage, etc.) have none of you stopped to wonder who these early Christians had to fight against? Was there a large faction of atheists, Muslims, and Jews cropping up and forcing Christians to bear the burden of these wicked deeds? Har har. Oh wait, they were Christians who were following what the bible said concerning slavery, women, and the mixing of blood with the dreaded and marked damned.

Like I said in the debate, you Christians can't even tell me who decides which rules should be followed in the Bible and which should be ignored, and funniest

of all is you'll never know if you're following all of the correct rules because there is no prophet in the bible clearly stating which rules are done away with. You yourself pick the rules which make you feel good and do away with the ones you don't agree with. Me, I just choose to follow even less of those rules than you do. Guess we both might be going to hell since God was too much of a dick to give us a clear rulebook to go off of. I'll bring the cigars. You bring the beer.

Leighton.

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